BARRETT & COLLINS ON GIULIANI

The Nation.

9/11 IN A MOVIE-MADE WORLD

by TOM ENGELHARDT

ALSO:

ERIC BOEHLERT on THE MEDIA

MOUSTAFA BAYOUMI on ARAB AMERICA

DAVID COLE on OUR LIBERTIES

SEPTEMBER 25, 2006
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CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

The Greening of America

New York City

■ Can Mark Hertsgaard's "Green Goes Grassroots" [July 31/Aug. 7] dig deeper? I was surprised at his assertion that poor people and people of color are not concerned about ozone depletion, toxic gas and polluted water. In fact, the call for environmental justice is truly a movement that has sprung from the grassroots—from concerned parents of students at Marsh Fork Elementary in Sundial, West Virginia, where a massive silo, sludge dam and mountain-top coal removal refinery near the school blackens the lungs of their children; from cancer-ridden African-American families in Dickson, Tennessee, who discovered that the source of their illnesses was a landfill contaminating the family well; and from low-income residents of Fort Ord, California, who are fed up with the routine burning of Army munitions that release toxic gases. The struggles of these communities and others will be highlighted this fall when grassroots environmental groups from San Jose, California, to Newark, New Jersey, and Whitesville, West Virginia, will take a very close look at the devastating impact of toxic contamination on people of color and poor communities.

Caravans packed with grassroots activists, health researchers, environmental scientists and public policy experts will tour communities in the Northeast, the South and on the West Coast, where citizens are suffering serious health effects from toxic pollution. Organizers representing more than seventy EJ groups are collaborating in a solution-oriented campaign that will reveal just how engaged these communities are in the fight for their collective health. Readers can find out about the Environmental Justice for All Tour at http://ej4all.org. I must say, however, that it is surprising they didn't learn about it in your cover story. VIRGINIA GIORDANO

National director, Environmental Justice for All Tour '06

San Francisco

■ I write to correct two misimpressions in Mark Hertsgaard's thoughtful story about environmentalism. First, the Sierra Club–Steelworkers Union Alliance has received more than $500,000 from foundations that look to us to be a key driver of progressive change. While I intended to make the point that this was insufficient to carry out our robust plans, I did not want to imply that we are waiting to launch our efforts. Second, we are painfully aware of the issues raised by race and class for our movement, and we are confronting these challenges and failures at the grassroots level—where it counts the most—through our growing environmental justice program, which works with local leaders to support communities of color. CARL POPE

Executive director, Sierra Club

Santa Fe

■ A distinction needs to be made between professional and grassroots environmentalism. Citizens should support the work of some full-time activists representing their interests. The ones who get support will generally already be the leaders on the issue in the community. Professionalism is different. Professionalism describes what was a deliberately and unapologetically designed, funded and implemented strategy begun in the early 1980s by a group of large foundations loosely grouped as the EGA (Environmental Grantmakers Association). At the outset EGA's orientation was political. The model of the DC insider was prioritized, along with newly emerging ideas of spin resulting in competition among "grantees" for things like who could promise to raise enough money to buy the biggest full-page ad. It was the era of the consultant and the pollster. There was a strong link to the Democrats, and soon the newly professionalized environmental movement became essentially an organizing branch of the party, thereby fulfilling what was probably the original intent.

The Nation should be careful not to think that comparing the relative successes and failures of these groups constitutes a look at the environmental movement. The grassroots environmental movement still exists, as it has from before the money blew through. It is based on the trust that ordinary people have in one another to stand up when pushed too far. Frequently it is years before such people come in contact with the strata sampled in this article. Sometimes never. CHARLOTTE TALBERTH

Salt Lake City

■ Thank you for "Green Goes Grassroots," which mentions Salt Lake City's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our city has cut these emissions by more than 21 percent—and we saved taxpayers' money (see www.slcgreen.com). These results are replicable by every government entity—federal, state and local. Many of the measures we have undertaken are also available to businesses and individuals. Informed action is all it takes.

Unfortunately, informed action on global warming is hard to find at the federal level. Fortunately, in cities all over the country mayors are leading the charge. Mayors committing to major cuts in fossil fuel emissions know that many corporations large and small, as well as several nations, are significantly reducing global-warming pollution through two basic strategies: greater efficiency and the use of clean, renewable energy sources.

One small correction: The conference at which Jerome Ringo spoke in June was the New Cities Project meeting, not the National Conference of Mayors. The New Cities Project (www.newcities.us) is a network for mayors dedicated to developing "high road" policies for American cities. The project brings together research resources, policy innovations and leaders to create progressive cities of shared prosperity, environmental responsibility, sound management and democratic accountability.

ROSS C. ANDERSON

Mayor, Salt Lake City

East Quogue, NY

■ I am amazed that Mark Hertsgaard doesn't see the contradiction between identifying global warming as "the single gravest threat to our collective future" and his proposed solution: to drive "the next great wave of economic growth in this country." Global warming is the end result of cheap oil, overconsumption and untrammeled economic growth. A continuation of growth, even an Apollo Alliance ("massive green jobs and development," "green energy technology," "3 million new jobs"), is a 45-degree change when we need a 180-degree turnaround.

Moreover, the Apollo Alliance promotion of the oxymoron "clean coal" and revival of the auto industry will only add to the top-heavy CO_2 budget now destroying the earth. If this isn't the "technical-fix solutions" that Hertsgaard decries, nothing is. So much for a new, enlightened environmentalism.

Hertsgaard and his sources talk of "political power," a new environmental majority and facing issues of "race and class." Well, you can't have any of these without a message, and an honest workable one, not one that panders to the American expectation that our way of life just needs some tweaking here and there. The message is that we need huge changes, many of which will cause dislocation and hardship, which will be far worse if we continue to believe the myth of continued economic growth.

It is the poor and the disempowered who need to be honestly informed about both the inequity and the unsustainability of our present capitalist growth model. Any movement that doesn't level with them doesn't deserve to gain power. LORNA SALZMAN

HERTSGAARD REPLIES

San Francisco

■ Thanks to these and all the other folks who responded to this article; it's nice to see that so

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EDITORIALS

The Path From 9/11

Over the next few days, as we mark the fifth anniversary of September 11, 2001, Americans will watch endless replays of the attacks on the World Trade Center. They will relive the horrifying moments when the Twin Towers collapsed, sending up smoke and dust that called to mind the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima.

That terrifying but false parallel, reinforced by decades of films about nuclear Armageddon, helps explain why the Bush Administration was able to convince Americans to go along with its post-9/11 agenda, as Tom Engelhardt argues in his provocative essay in this issue. What would have happened, he asks, if there had been no such images: "Would state-to-state 'war' and 'acts of terror' have been so quickly conjoined in the media as a 'war on terror' and would that phrase have made it, in just over a week, into a major presidential address?" And would the Administration's fantasy mushroom clouds rising over US cities "have so dominated American consciousness?"

It is a question worth pondering as we look back on the disastrous path down which George W. Bush has led the country, and contemplate what it will take to set this nation right again. Seizing on the fears of traumatized citizens (and abetted by media hype, as Eric Boehlert details on page 30), this Administration used—and is still using—the images of 9/11 to advance its partisan agenda. Abroad, that includes the Iraq invasion and the expansion of military power; at home, the overriding of constitutional liberties in the name of protecting our freedom. As this magazine wrote on the first anniversary of 9/11, "Rather than pursuing a limited military action in Afghanistan designed to strike a swift blow against the terrorist leadership responsible for the attacks and then joining in a sustained, worldwide policing action to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure, the Bush Administration has exploited the tragedy as a license for an endless war against endless enemies."

At long last, however, it appears that Americans are beginning to distinguish between the need to combat terrorism effectively and a messianic crusade in the Middle East. Three out of five now think the war in Iraq made a terrorist attack in the United States more likely. Another sign that people are seeing through the White House lies: In 2003 Americans queried by a *New York Times*/CBS poll agreed two to one that the Iraq War was part of the "war on terror." Recently a similar poll found that Americans reject that idea by 51 to 44 percent. So, too, are Americans increasingly questioning the leadership of a President who refuses to hold anyone responsible for the errors surrounding 9/11 and who has even tried to block investigations of the failures. Recent polls show Bush's approval rating below 40 percent. Yet the chief architects of his policies—most notoriously Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld—are still in charge, lashing out at their critics as engaging in "appeasement," while Bush's Congressional allies try to play the 9/11 card one more time.

Will it play? Perhaps. But there is a growing view—on the part of independents and members of both parties—that this Administration should be held accountable for its profound mistakes and arrogant miscalculations. The results of those policies are painful to recount: An increasingly violent war in Iraq that has claimed thousands of American and Iraqi lives and unleashed chaos in the Middle East; a new generation of jihadists; the prospect of perpetual war; loss of respect even among America's traditional allies; and the undermining of democracy at home.

The fifth anniversary of 9/11 prompts grief and sadness, but also anger. This country has endured a terrible failure of leadership. In the long run, we must free ourselves from the idea that the "war on terror" is an organizing principle for our foreign policy. In the short term, we need to change course.

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Knocking on Wood

Underlying George W. Bush's remarkable "torture works" speech on September 6 were two trademark themes: The American people are still vulnerable to a terrorist attack, and the Administration has succeeded in protecting us.

The President has it half right—we are still vulnerable to a terrorist attack. In fact, we may be more vulnerable than ever. But that is in large part because of—not in spite of—the Administration's so-called "war on terror." By employing illegitimate means—from renditions to disappearances to torture to a war against a country that did not attack or threaten us—in the name of protecting us from terrorist attacks, the Administration has played into Al Qaeda's hands. It has given the enemy the best recruiting propaganda it could ever have hoped for, created a state-of-the-art terrorist training camp in the streets of Iraq and fostered the growth of a loose-knit global band of fanatic criminals who are willing to do unspeakable violence to teach the United States a lesson.

But there hasn't been a terrorist attack on US soil since 9/11. Surely the Administration deserves credit for that? When former Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge noted this absence of terrorist attacks at a press conference upon stepping down from his post, he knocked on wood. It was a fitting gesture, because the Administration is hard-pressed to point to its initiatives as a cause for that fortuitous fact.

More than 5,000 foreign nationals within the United States were locked up in anti-terrorism initiatives in the first two years after 9/11—yet as I have noted before, not a single one has been convicted of a terrorist crime. The Special Registration program also came up short. It required 80,000 immigrants from countries with predominantly Arab and Muslim populations to come into immigration offices for interviews, fingerprinting and photographing. Yet it failed to identify and convict a single terrorist.

The Administration boasts of indicting more than 400 people in terror-related cases since 9/11, and of obtaining more than 200 convictions. But the vast majority of these cases feature no charges of terrorism at all—only routine charges of credit card fraud or false statements on a federal form. Virtually all of those who actually faced a "terrorism" charge are accused not of any terrorist act, nor even of conspiracy to engage in terrorism, but of "material support" for a group labeled as terrorist, under a law so overbroad that it requires no proof of intent to support terrorist activity. The Justice Department recently invoked this law to arrest a Staten Island man for selling satellite broadcasts from Al Manar, a television station owned by Lebanon's Hezbollah.

The President claimed in his speech that the CIA's harsh interrogations of disappeared Al Qaeda suspects has foiled terrorist attacks and saved American lives, but he gave no details that could confirm those claims. And the fact remains that the President has not and cannot point to any terrorist convictions obtained as a result of such "intelligence."

Zacarias Moussaoui and shoe bomber Richard Reid remain

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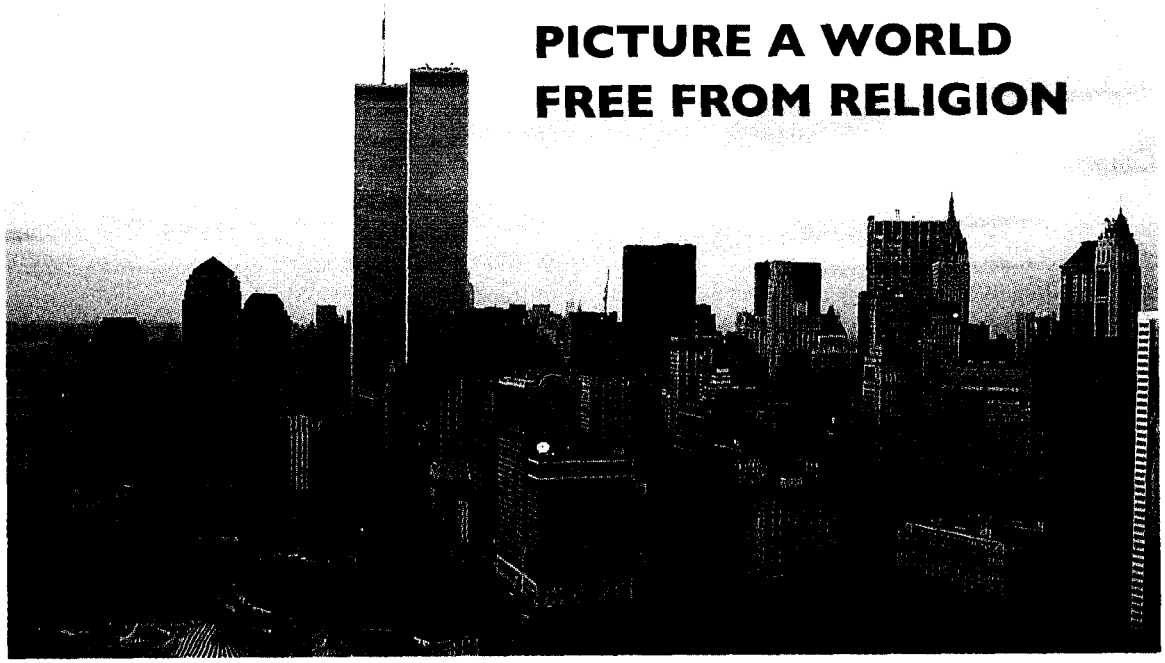

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the two most dangerous terrorists brought to justice in the United States since 9/11, and neither man's conviction can be attributed to post-9/11 initiatives—Moussaoui was arrested before 9/11, and Reid was identified by a British airline attendant.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department is left focusing its efforts on such "terror suspects" as a ragtag group in Florida arrested in June for allegedly plotting to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago. None of the defendants had ever been to Chicago, and the FBI's deputy director admitted that the group was "more aspirational than operational." The principal items they purchased toward achieving their alleged goal were combat boots.

In the President's eyes, the threat of terrorism has justified warrantless spying on Americans, detention without charges of thousands around the world and at home, unprecedented intrusions on privacy, close monitoring of Quakers and other antiwar dissenters, and the torture of suspects at Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib and elsewhere—all in the name of making us safe. But fulfilling Ben Franklin's warning, it appears we have sacrificed liberty for security, and obtained neither.

Recent polls suggest that Americans are beginning to get it. In August the Associated Press reported that 43 percent were embarrassed by the US image abroad, and that 60 percent thought the war in Iraq made a terrorist attack within the United States more likely. A Quinnipiac University poll found that more than half of Americans disapprove of how the President has pursued the "war on terror," both overseas and at home, suggesting that the Republicans are losing their trump card.

The President still doesn't get it. He has brought the disappeared into the open in order to bring them to justice, while retaining the option to disappear and torture again. But convicting those we have so harshly abused will be next to impossible. And we will not achieve justice until we learn that we must pursue the goal of protecting ourselves from terrorism without sacrificing fundamental commitments to equal respect and dignity for all.

DAVID COLE

David Cole (cole@law.georgetown.edu) is The Nation*'s legal affairs correspondent.*

Plame's Role at the CIA

In spring 2002 Dick Cheney made one of his periodic trips to CIA headquarters. Officers and analysts were summoned to brief him on Iraq. Paramilitary specialists updated the Vice President on an extensive covert action program in motion designed to pave the way for a US invasion. Cheney questioned analysts about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. How could they be used against US troops? Which Iraqi units had chemical or biological weapons? He was not seeking information on whether Saddam posed a threat because he possessed such weapons. His queries, according to a CIA officer at the briefing, were pegged to the assumptions that Iraq had these weapons and would be invaded—as if a decision had been made.

Though Cheney was already looking toward war, the officers of the agency's Joint Task Force on Iraq—part of the Counter-proliferation Division of the agency's clandestine Directorate of Operations—were frantically toiling away in the basement, mounting espionage operations to gather information on the WMD programs Iraq might have. The JTFI was trying to find evidence that would back up the White House's assertion that Iraq was a WMD danger. Its chief of operations was a career undercover officer named Valerie Wilson.

Her specific position at the CIA is revealed for the first time in a new book, *Hubris: The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War*, by the author of this article and *Newsweek*'s Michael Isikoff. The book chronicles the inside battles within the CIA, the White House, the State Department and Congress during the run-up to the war. Its account of Wilson's CIA career is mainly based on interviews with confidential CIA sources.

In July 2003—four months after the invasion of Iraq—Wilson would be outed as a CIA "operative on weapons of mass destruction" in a column by conservative journalist Robert Novak, who would cite two "senior administration officials" as his sources. (As *Hubris* discloses, one was Richard Armitage, the number-two at the State Department; Karl Rove, Bush's chief strategist, was the other. I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Cheney's chief of staff, also talked to two reporters about her.) Novak revealed her CIA identity—using her maiden name, Valerie Plame—in the midst of the controversy ignited by former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, her husband, who had written a *New York Times* op-ed accusing the Bush Administration of having "twisted" intelligence "to exaggerate the Iraqi threat."

The Novak column triggered a scandal and a criminal investigation. At issue was whether Novak's sources had violated a little-known law that makes it a federal crime for a government official to disclose identifying information about a covert US officer (if that official knew the officer was undercover). A key question was, What did Valerie Wilson do at the CIA? Was she truly undercover? In a subsequent column, Novak reported that she was "an analyst, not in covert operations." White House press secretary Scott McClellan suggested that her employment at the CIA was no secret. Jonah Goldberg of *National Review* claimed, "Wilson's wife is a desk jockey and much of the Washington cocktail circuit knew that already."

Valerie Wilson was no analyst or paper-pusher. She was an operations officer working on a top priority of the Bush Administration. Armitage, Rove and Libby had revealed information about a CIA officer who had searched for proof of the President's case. In doing so, they harmed her career and put at risk operations she had worked on and foreign agents and sources she had handled.

Another issue was whether Valerie Wilson had sent her husband to Niger to check out an intelligence report that Iraq had sought uranium there. *Hubris* contains new information undermining the charge that she arranged this trip. In an interview with the authors, Douglas Rohn, a State Department officer who wrote a crucial memo related to the trip, acknowledges he may have inadvertently created a misimpression that her involvement was more significant than it had been.

Valerie Plame was recruited into the CIA in 1985, straight out of Pennsylvania State University. After two years of training to

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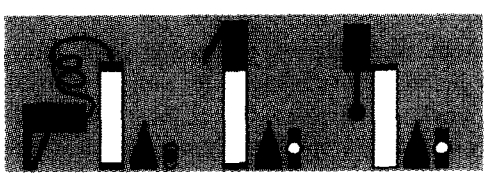

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be a covert case officer, she served a stint on the Greece desk, according to Fred Rustmann, a former CIA official who supervised her then. Next she was posted to Athens and posed as a State Department employee. Her job was to spot and recruit agents for the agency. In the early 1990s she became what's known as a nonofficial cover officer. NOCs are the most clandestine of the CIA's frontline officers. They do not pretend to work for the US government; they do not have the protection of diplomatic immunity. They might claim to be a businessperson. She told people she was with an energy firm. Her main mission remained the same: to gather agents for the CIA.

In 1997 she returned to CIA headquarters and joined the Counterproliferation Division. (About this time, she moved in with Joseph Wilson; they later married.) She was eventually given a choice: North Korea or Iraq. She selected the latter. Come spring 2001, she was in the CPD's modest Iraq branch. But that summer—before 9/11—word came down from the brass: We're ramping up on Iraq. Her unit was expanded and renamed the Joint Task Force on Iraq. Within months of 9/11, the JTFI grew to fifty or so employees. Valerie Wilson was placed in charge of its operations group.

There was great pressure on the JTFI to deliver. Its primary target was Iraqi scientists. JTFI officers, under Wilson's supervision, tracked down relatives, students and associates of Iraqi scientists—in America and abroad—looking for potential sources. They encouraged Iraqi émigrés to visit Iraq and put questions to relatives of interest to the CIA. The JTFI was also handling walk-ins around the world. Increasingly, Iraqi defectors were showing up at Western embassies claiming they had information on Saddam's WMDs. JTFI officers traveled throughout the world to debrief them. Often it would take a JTFI officer only a few minutes to conclude someone was pulling a con. Yet every lead had to be checked. "We knew nothing about what was going on in Iraq," a CIA official recalled. "We were way behind the eight ball. We had to look under every rock." Wilson, too, occasionally flew overseas to monitor operations. She also went to Jordan to work with Jordanian intelligence officials who had intercepted a shipment of aluminum tubes heading to Iraq that CIA analysts were claiming—wrongly—were for a nuclear weapons program. (The analysts rolled over the government's top nuclear experts, who had concluded the tubes were not destined for a nuclear program.)

The JTFI found nothing. The few scientists it managed to reach insisted Saddam had no WMD programs. Task force officers sent reports detailing the denials into the CIA bureaucracy. The defectors were duds—fabricators and embellishers. (JTFI officials came to suspect that some had been sent their way by Ahmad Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, an exile group that desired a US invasion of Iraq.) The results were frustrating for the officers. Were they not doing their job well enough—or did Saddam not have an arsenal of unconventional weapons? Valerie Wilson and other JTFI officers were almost too overwhelmed to consider the possibility that their small number of operations was, in a way, coming up with the correct answer: There was no intelligence to find on Saddam's WMDs because the weapons did not exist. Still, she and her colleagues kept looking. (She also assisted operations involving Iran and WMDs.)

When the war started in March 2003, JTFI officers were disappointed. "I felt like we ran out of time," one CIA officer recalled. "The war came so suddenly. We didn't have enough information to challenge the assumption that there were WMDs.... How do you know it's a dry well? that Saddam was constrained? Given more time, we could have worked through the issue.... From 9/11 to the war—eighteen months—that was not enough time to get a good answer to this important question."

When the Novak column ran, Valerie Wilson was in the process of changing her clandestine status from NOC to official cover, as she prepared for a new job in personnel management. Her aim, she told colleagues, was to put in time as an administrator—to rise up a notch or two—and then return to secret operations. But with her cover blown, she could never be undercover again. Moreover, she would now be pulled into the partisan warfare of Washington. As a CIA employee still sworn to secrecy, she wasn't able to explain publicly that she had spent nearly two years searching for evidence to support the Administration's justification for war and had come up empty.

Valerie Wilson left the CIA at the end of 2005. In July she and her husband filed a civil lawsuit against Cheney, Rove and Libby, alleging they had conspired to "discredit, punish and seek revenge against" the Wilsons. She is also writing a memoir. Her next battle may be with the agency—over how much of her story the CIA will allow the outed spy to tell.

DAVID CORN

CALVIN TRILLIN

George Bush's Pledge To the People of New Orleans On The Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina

The Feds, he said, will not abandon you—
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And he'll return next year to say the same.
Until that time, of course, they're on their own.

Chicago's Living Wage

As Americans return to their jobs after Labor Day, they should remember that this Republican Congress has refused to raise the minimum wage, which has remained stagnant at $5.15 for an unconscionable nine years. In the GOP's latest display of contempt for working Americans, Republican lawmakers recently attempted to attach a minimum wage increase to a bill

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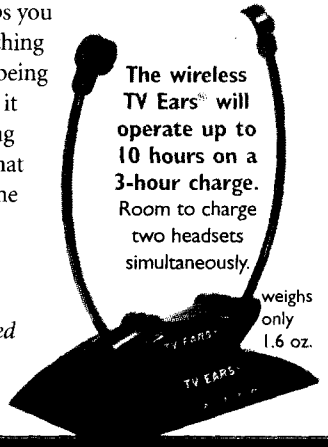

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COMMENT

that would cut the estate tax and cost the Treasury $268 billion over the next decade. According to the GOP, in order for those Americans who have been doing an honest day's work for $10,700 a year to get a raise, Paris Hilton and the richest 8,200 families must receive yet another irresponsible tax cut the country can't afford. Democrats refused to go along with the GOP's cynical legislative shenanigans and the bill failed to pass the Senate.

Tired of such callous disregard for hard-working people, grassroots activists and progressive representatives at the state and local levels are stepping up to the plate. Twenty-two states and Washington, DC, have enacted higher minimum wages than the federal government, and several more may raise wages this November, thanks to ballot initiatives. On the local level, a landmark ordinance was recently passed in Chicago, handing the living-wage movement its most significant victory to date. On July 26 the Chicago City Council voted 35 to 14 to require "big box" stores to pay a living wage of $10 plus $3 in benefits per hour to employees by July 2010. The ordinance affects stores that net more than $1 billion annually and that occupy more than 90,000 square feet, including Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Toys 'R' Us and Home Depot.

"This ordinance brings hope to thousands of people. A job should lift a person out of poverty, not keep him in poverty," says Alderman Joseph Moore, the law's chief sponsor. "Chicago is on the forefront of a growing movement in cities and towns across the nation to fill the void left by the federal government."

The victory was the culmination of two years of massive mobilization by Chicago's Grassroots Collaborative, and it did not come easily. The coalition—which included ACORN and a wide array of labor, faith and antipoverty groups—faced strong opposition from Wal-Mart, big retail associations, Chicago's mainstream media and the city's powerful mayor, Richard Daley.

The campaign kicked off in 2004 when Wal-Mart announced plans to open a store in Chicago's heavily poor and black South Side. Madeline Talbott of ACORN knew that opposing Wal-Mart outright was a losing battle. "Our members are low-income folks, and Wal-Mart is their favorite store because of the prices," Talbott said. "But they were also appalled by the company's practices. A lot of them said, 'Yeah, I want to shop at Wal-Mart, but I've got a sister who works there in another neighborhood, and she gets no benefits, and it's been terrible for her.'" When Talbott and fellow organizers discovered that Costco, one of Wal-Mart's major competitors, was paying a living wage and providing benefits while still turning a profit, the idea for the big-box ordinance ("We didn't want to make it just an anti–Wal-Mart thing," she says) hit them.

The Grassroots Collaborative began mobilizing on the ground, knocking on doors and organizing house meetings. The response from the community was overwhelming. In February it delivered 10,000 signed postcards supporting the ordinance to the City Council. A month later an alderman put the issue on his ward's ballot as a referendum, and it passed easily.

As the City Council began to take the movement more seriously, the opposition became more intense. Wal-Mart and the Illinois Retail Merchants Association (IRMA) spent vast sums on a large lobbying campaign and advertising in Chicago media, including on the popular black talk-radio station WVON. The city's major newspapers, the *Sun-Times* and the *Tribune*, consistently attacked the initiative, toeing the corporate line and arguing that it would lead to huge job losses for Chicagoans. Mayor Daley, notorious for his viselike grip on the City Council, loudly opposed the measure as well.

Despite overwhelming pressure from powerful moneyed forces, the movement continued to gain support. Days before the City Council vote, a Lake Research Partners Poll commissioned by the Grassroots Collaborative found 84 percent support for the ordinance—90 percent among African-Americans. "They had the money, but we had the people," says Talbott. "It was a stark reality to see this huge media frenzy coming out against us, but in the final weeks we had so much support there were people literally ripping signs out of our hands and hoisting them in the air, cars honking everywhere we went, tons of people joining our rallies and calling their officials."

The aldermen sided with the people, but the fight is far from over. First, there's the possibility of a veto from Daley, which would be his first in seventeen years in office. But Daley would have to convince two aldermen to switch their votes in order to avoid an override, and with such overwhelming support and continued pressure from the Grassroots Collaborative, that would be difficult.

Then there's the brewing legal challenge from the IRMA. Many opponents are confident that the courts will overturn the bill by finding it in violation of federal ERISA standards; they point to Maryland, where the courts killed the Fair Share Health Care Act (which would have mandated that Wal-Mart and other large companies provide health benefits). Yet Paul Sonn of NYU's Brennan Center for Justice, who helped craft the Chicago ordinance, says this law is different from Maryland's and that he's "very confident" it will be upheld. "Every federal court of appeals that has reviewed a wage and benefit law like this one has upheld it under ERISA," he contends.

The ordinance is already making waves beyond Chicago's city limits. Alderman Moore has been fielding calls from politicians across the country interested in passing similar bills, and Illinois's ACORN office is sharing strategies with grassroots organizations in other urban areas. The victory has boosted energy and confidence in the campaign in Washington, DC, which is considering an ordinance like Chicago's. "We've tapped into something," says Talbott. "The demand for a decent wage and decent benefits is so strong. These people withstood all of the media, all of the scare tactics and they didn't flinch."

KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL AND SAM GRAHAM-FELSEN

ON THE WEB: Sasha Abramsky writes on the growing appeal of Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson. Jeremy Brecher and Brendan Smith raise the alarm on legislation that would kill key provisions of the War Crimes Act. John Ross reports from Mexico on the end of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's three-year struggle for the presidency and on a looming class war.

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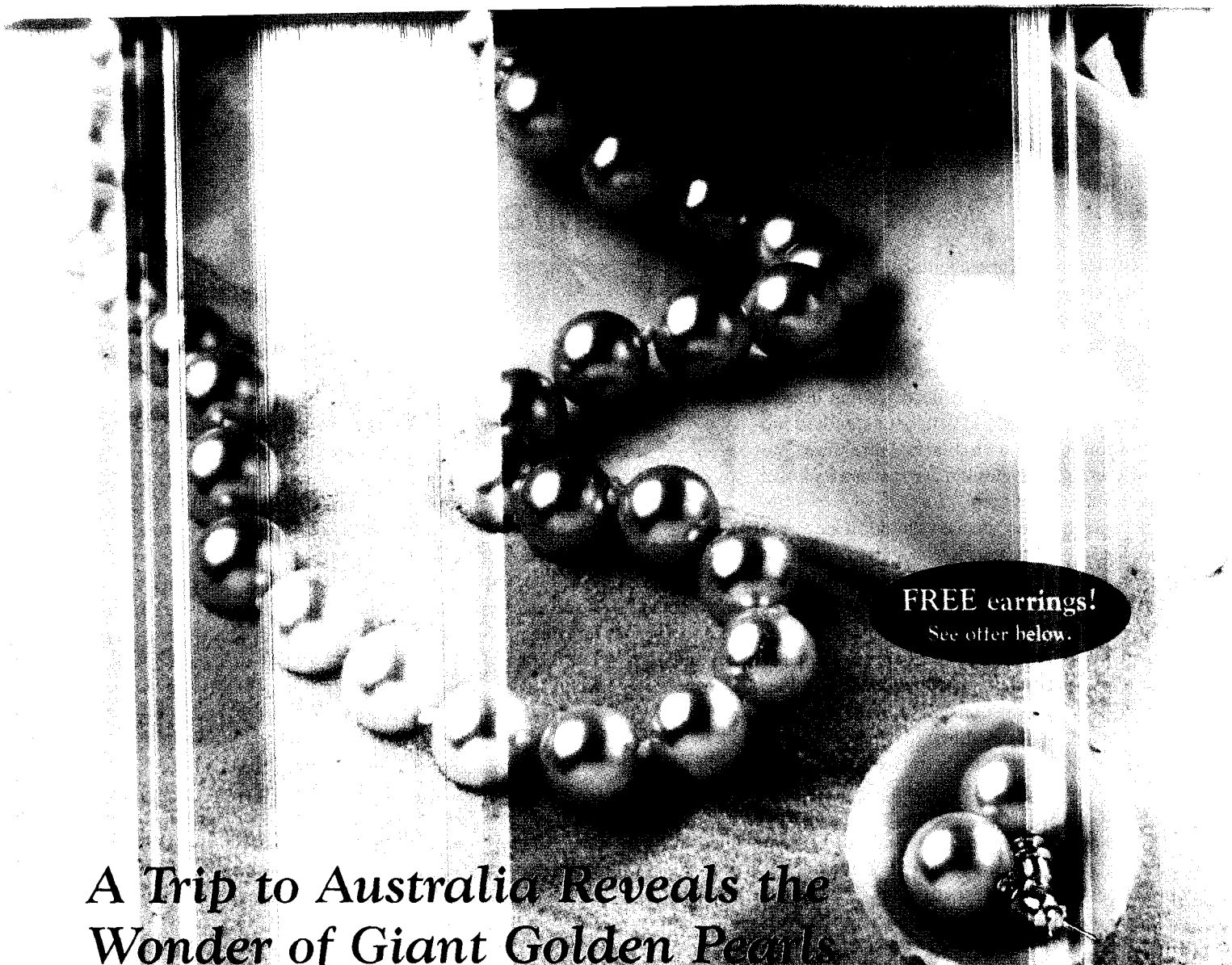

A Trip to Australia Reveals the Wonder of Giant Golden Pearls

Just before 1900, in a small isolated town called Broome Australia, fishermen came across the rarest oyster-a giant named the Pinctada maxima. This world's largest oyster contained the voluptuous South Sea Pearl—the most sought after pearl in the world. After this discovery, Broome soon became the dominant pearl trading post in the world and literally 80% of all worldwide pearl trading passed through Broome.

A trip to Broome. We took the long trip to the South Pacific to study the famous white lipped oysters that produced magnificent pearls that are often 11-14mm—about 8 times the size (and 8 times the price!) of a standard pearl. Not only did these oysters produce the rare South Sea pearl, but they also produced a tremendous amounts of mother of pearl or nacre. Nacre is the lustrous iridescent substance which is secreted by the oyster to form the shiny inside of their shells. When nacre secretions are deposited around the pearl seed they build up to form a full sized pearl. Our bio-scientists went to work to see if we could improve upon Mother Nature's process a little. By extracting the seed pearl from young oyster shells and speeding up the process in the lab, we coated the natural seed pearls with nacre from the inside of the giant shells, and were able to produce the breathtaking lab-coated Australian Pacific Pearl.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

The 9/11 Conspiracy Nuts

You trip over one fundamental idiocy of the 9/11 conspiracy nuts in the first paragraph of the book by one of their high priests, David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor.* "In many respects," Griffin writes, "the strongest evidence provided by critics of the official account involves the events of 9/11 itself.... In light of standard procedures for dealing with hijacked airplanes...not one of these planes should have reached its target, let alone all three of them."

The operative word here is "should." One central characteristic of the nuts is that they have a devout, albeit preposterous, belief in American efficiency, and hence many of them start with the racist premise that "Arabs in caves" weren't capable of the mission. They believe that military systems work the way Pentagon press flacks and aerospace salesmen say they should work. They believe that at 8:14 AM, when AA Flight 11 switched off its radio and transponder, an FAA flight controller should have called the National Military Command center and NORAD. They believe, citing reverently (this from high priest Griffin) "the US Air Force's own website," that an F-15 could have intercepted AA Flight 11 "by 8:24, and certainly no later than 8:30."

They appear to have read no military history, which is too bad because if they had they'd know that minutely planned operations—let alone responses to an unprecedented emergency—screw up with monotonous regularity, by reason of stupidity, cowardice, venality and other whims of Providence.

According to the minutely prepared plans of the Strategic Air Command, an impending Soviet attack would have prompted the missile silos in North Dakota to open and the ICBMs to arc toward Moscow and kindred targets. The tiny number of test launches actually attempted all failed, whereupon SAC gave up testing. Was it badly designed equipment, human incompetence, defense contractor venality or... *conspiracy*? Did the April 24, 1980, effort to rescue the hostages in the US Embassy in Tehran fail because a sandstorm disabled three of the eight helicopters, or because agents of William Casey poured sugar into their gas tanks in yet another *conspiracy*?

Do the military's varying attempts to explain why F-15s didn't intercept and shoot down the hijacked planes stem from predictable attempts to cover up the usual screw-ups, or because of *conspiracy*? Is Mr. Cohen in his little store at the end of the block hiking his prices because he wants to make a buck, or because his rent just went up, or because the Jews want to take over the world? Bebel said anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools. These days the 9/11 conspiracy fever is fast becoming the "socialism" of the left.

My in-box overflows each day with fresh "proofs" of how the towers were demolished. I meet people who start quietly, asking me what I think about 9/11. What they are actually trying to find out is whether I'm part of the coven. I imagine it is like being a normal Stoic in the second century AD going for a stroll in the forum and meeting some fellow asking, with seeming casualness, whether it's possible to feed 5,000 people on five loaves of bread and a couple of fish.

Indeed, at my school the vicar used to urge on us Frank Morison's book *Who Moved the Stone?* It demonstrated, with exhaustive citation from the Gospels, that since on these accounts no human had moved the stone from in front of Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, it must have been an angel who rolled it aside, so Jesus could exit, astonish the mourners and then ascend. Of course, Morison didn't allow the possibility that angels never existed or that the Gospel writers were making it up.

It's the same pattern with the 9/11 nuts. There are photos of the impact of the "object" that hit the Pentagon—i.e., the Boeing 757, Flight 77—that seem to show the sort of hole a missile might make. Ergo, it *was* a missile and a 757 didn't hit the Pentagon. As regards the hole, my brother Andrew—writing a book about Rumsfeld—has seen photos taken within thirty minutes of impact clearly showing the outline of an entire plane, including wings. This was visible as soon as the smoke blew away.

And if it was a missile, what happened to the 757? Did the conspirators shoot it down somewhere else, or force it down and then kill the passengers? Why plan to demolish the towers with pre-placed explosives if your conspiracy includes control of the two planes that hit them? Why bother with the planes at all? Why blame Osama if your fall guy is Saddam Hussein?

The demolition scenario is classic who-moved-the-stonery. The towers didn't fall because they were badly built as a consequence of corruption, incompetence, regulatory evasions by the Port Authority and because they were struck by huge planes loaded with jet fuel. No, they collapsed because Dick Cheney's agents methodically planted demolition charges in the preceding days. It was a conspiracy of thousands, all of whom—party to mass murder—have held their tongues ever since.

Of course, the buildings didn't suddenly pancake. People inside who survived the collapse didn't hear a series of explosions. As discussed in Wayne Barrett and Dan Collins's marvelous *Grand Illusion*, about Rudy Giuliani and 9/11, helicopter pilots radioed warnings nine minutes before the final collapse of the South Tower that it might well go down, and similar warnings, repeatedly, as much as twenty-five minutes before the North Tower's fall.

What Barrett and Collins brilliantly show are the actual corrupt conspiracies on Giuliani's watch (see also page 27 of this issue); the favoritism to Motorola, which saddled the firemen with radios that didn't work; the ability of the Port Authority to scrimp on fire protection; the mayor's catastrophic failure in the years before 9/11 to organize an effective emergency command, meaning that many lives could have been saved, cops and firemen could have communicated and firemen could have heard the helicopter warnings and the Mayday messages that saved most of the police. That's the real world, in which Giuliani and others have never been held accountable. Instead, the conspiracy nuts have combined to produce a ludicrous distraction. ■

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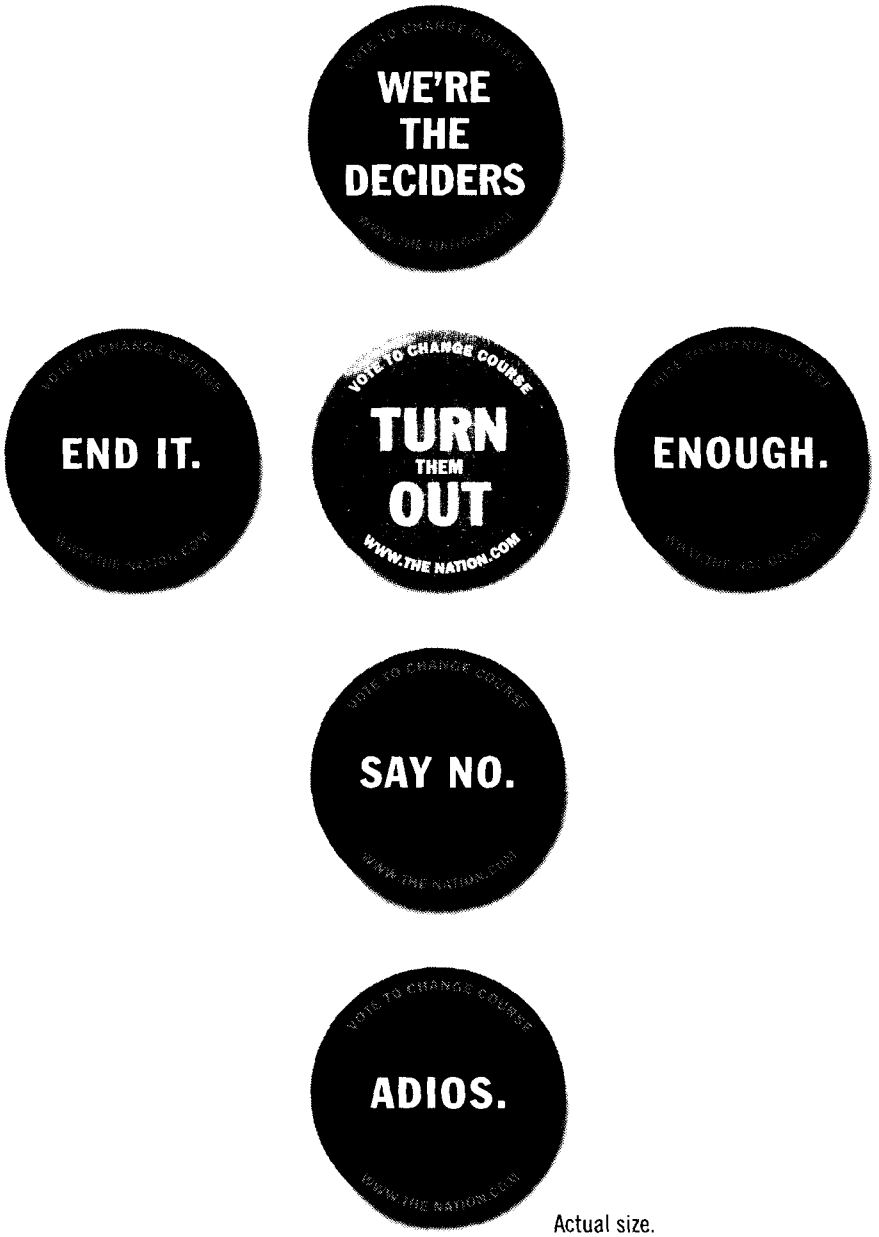

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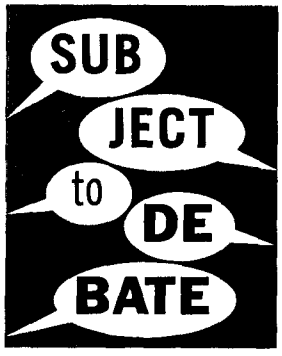
KATHA POLLITT

Islamo-Fascism—Take Two



No sooner had the magazine gone to print with my last column, in which I critiqued the term "Islamo-fascism" as ahistorical and propagandistic, than suddenly it was World War II all over again. "Once again, we face similar challenges in efforts to confront the rising threat of a new type of fascism," said Donald Rumsfeld, "but some seem not to have learned history's lessons." Just one lesson, actually, according to Vice President Cheney: "This is not an enemy that can be...appeased." Addressing veterans at an American Legion convention in Salt Lake City, President Bush referenced both fascism and communism and described "the war we fight today" as "the decisive ideological struggle of the twenty-first century." Noted foreign policy expert Rick Santorum summed it up: "We're at war with Islamic fascism, and Afghanistan and Iraq and Southern Lebanon and every country around the world is a front." Rick Santorum! Bet you didn't know he believed in secularism, women's rights and all that other enlightened stuff we are supposedly standing for in the Middle East. How far we've come from the days when Dan Quayle praised Saudi Arabia for its strong family values!

As usual, *Nation* readers added their two cents. Richard Rosenthal pointed out that Joe Lieberman's comparison of the Iraq War with the Spanish Civil War cast the United States as the resistance to Franco: "Uh, weren't they Communists?" (Yes, and anarchists too. In real life, he might have added, the United States was neutral in the Spanish Civil War, but why let facts get in the way?) Lawrence Levi cited George Orwell's great 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language": "The word Fascism has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies 'something not desirable.'"

The sides may have changed since World War II, but note that the left still gets to be on the wrong one, having gone from premature antifascist to fascist while practically standing in place. Still, as the mention of Orwell suggests, the left has a long history of hurling the F-word against its enemies, so the word's deployment by pro-warriors today is really our fault, like everything else. Starting today, let's stick to authoritarian, heavy-handed, unjust, illegal, violent, racist, misogynist, corrupt, inhumane, undemocratic, intolerant, overly vociferous, rude and bad. It's presumably those last three senses that erstwhile *New Republic* senior editor (and former *Nation* book critic) Lee Siegel had in mind when he coined the term "blogofascism" to describe, um, liberal bloggers. Daily Kossacks are the new Brownshirts? That takes trivialization to a whole new level.

What would be a better term? "Extremist" is too general. "Islamicist," "Islamist" and "fundamentalist" overlook the Shiite/Sunni split. "Jihadi" captures the militant religious nature of the various guerrilla, terrorist and political movements, but it misses two crucial things. First, states that are our allies, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, for instance, are deeply involved in promoting jihadism, and at least one state on our bad list—Syria—has a secular government with jihadist opposition. Second, the word confuses movements that have local, limited national aims, like the Taliban and Hamas, with movements with grand global ambitions, like Al Qaeda. Here is how tangled things can get: According to former NPR reporter Sarah Chayes, who has been living in Kandahar for the past four years, not only did Al Qaeda and the Taliban have different agendas, but since the Taliban is underwritten by our ally Pakistan, Afghans believe that the Taliban's recent resurgence is supported by the United States!

Perhaps there can be no one word, because there is no one phenomenon. The point of "fascism," Islamo- or otherwise, is not to explain our world, however, but to portray Bush critics as isolationists and appeasers, like "those who enabled Hitler," as Newt Gingrich recently claimed. Ever since 9/11, wondering if suicide bombers are merely psychopaths means you think they're heroes; resisting words like "evil" and "evildoers" as childish makes you a moral relativist; asking if hatred of freedom really explains everything from Iranian foreign policy to the Aceh independence movement means you hate freedom yourself. On the right, anti-warriors and leftists are regularly demonized as Osama-loving nihilists or multiculturalists too dim to grasp how bad Islam is. You'd think the American left had booked a plane to Mecca and that feminists are trading their tank tops for burqas. Never mind that these are the same people who, on another cultural battlefront, are regularly denounced as secular fundamentalists.

Still, anti-imperialism makes strange bedfellows. Quite a few Western leftists admired Khomeini's revolution in Iran. (Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson's fascinating *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution* detailed how even the notorious gay libertine could briefly be drawn to the gloomy mullahs.) I remember the attacks on Kate Millet for her early exposé of the regime's brutal repression of women and its obliteration of human rights. It was only when Khomeini started executing leftists that the US left took his measure. And apparently hope springs eternal: In August an interview with Hezbollah leader Nasrallah published in a Turkish socialist magazine went flying around the Net: In it he expressed his deep admiration for Che Guevara and welcomed the coming together of socialist and Islamic movements. When Nasrallah furiously denounced the interview as fraudulent and the magazine admitted it had been hoaxed, you could hear the air sadly leaking out of many a celebratory balloon.

That said, imperialism makes strange bedfellows too—and in a much more important bed. The United States gave massive financial and military support to the Afghan mujahedeen during the Soviet occupation—and the more vicious and bigoted, the better. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose men threw acid in the faces of unveiled women, was a particular favorite. Now he's making all kinds of trouble in Nooristan and Kunar provinces. If we really want to understand the Muslim world, let's start by acknowledging that today's "fascists" were yesterday's "freedom fighters." ■

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ARTICLES

We knew it was coming. Not, as conspiracy theorists imagine, just a few top officials among us, but all of us—and not for weeks or months, but for more than half a century before September 11, 2001.

That's why, for all the shock, it was, in a sense, so familiar. Americans were already imagining versions of September 11 soon after the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. That event set the American imagination boiling. Within weeks of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as scholar Paul Boyer has shown, all the familiar signs of nuclear fear were already in place—newspapers were drawing concentric circles of atomic destruction outward from fantasy Ground Zeroes in American cities, and magazines were offering visions of our country as a vaporized wasteland, while imagining millions of American dead.

And then, suddenly, one clear morning it seemed to arrive—by air, complete with images of the destruction of the mightiest monuments to our power, and (just as previously experienced) as an onscreen spectacle. At one point that day, it could be viewed on more than thirty channels, including some never previously involved with breaking news, and most of the country was watching.

Only relatively small numbers of New Yorkers actually experienced 9/11: those at the tip of Manhattan or close enough to watch the two planes smash into the World Trade Center towers, to watch (as some schoolchildren did) people leaping or falling from the upper floors of those buildings, to be enveloped in the vast cloud of smoke and ash, in the tens of thousands of pulverized computers and copying machines, the asbestos and flesh and plane, the shredded remains of millions of sheets of paper, of financial and office life as we know it. For most Americans, even those like me who were living in Manhattan, 9/11 arrived on the television screen. This is why what leapt to mind—and instantaneously filled our papers and TV reporting—was previous screen life, the movies.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the news was peppered with comments about, thoughts about and references to films. Reporters, as Caryn James wrote in the *New York Times* that first day, "compared the events to Hollywood action movies"; as did op-ed writers ("The scenes exceeded the worst of Hollywood's disaster movies"); columnists ("On TV, two national landmarks...look like the aftermath in the film *Independence Day*"); and eyewitnesses ("It was like one of them Godzilla movies"; "And then I saw an explosion straight out of *The Towering Inferno*"). Meanwhile, in an irony of the moment, Hollywood scrambled to excise from upcoming big- and small-screen life anything that might bring to mind thoughts of 9/11, including, in the case of Fox, promotion for the premiere episode of *24*, in which "a terrorist blows up an airplane." (Talk about missing the point!)

In our guts, we had always known it was coming. Like any errant offspring, Little Boy and Fat Man, those two atomic

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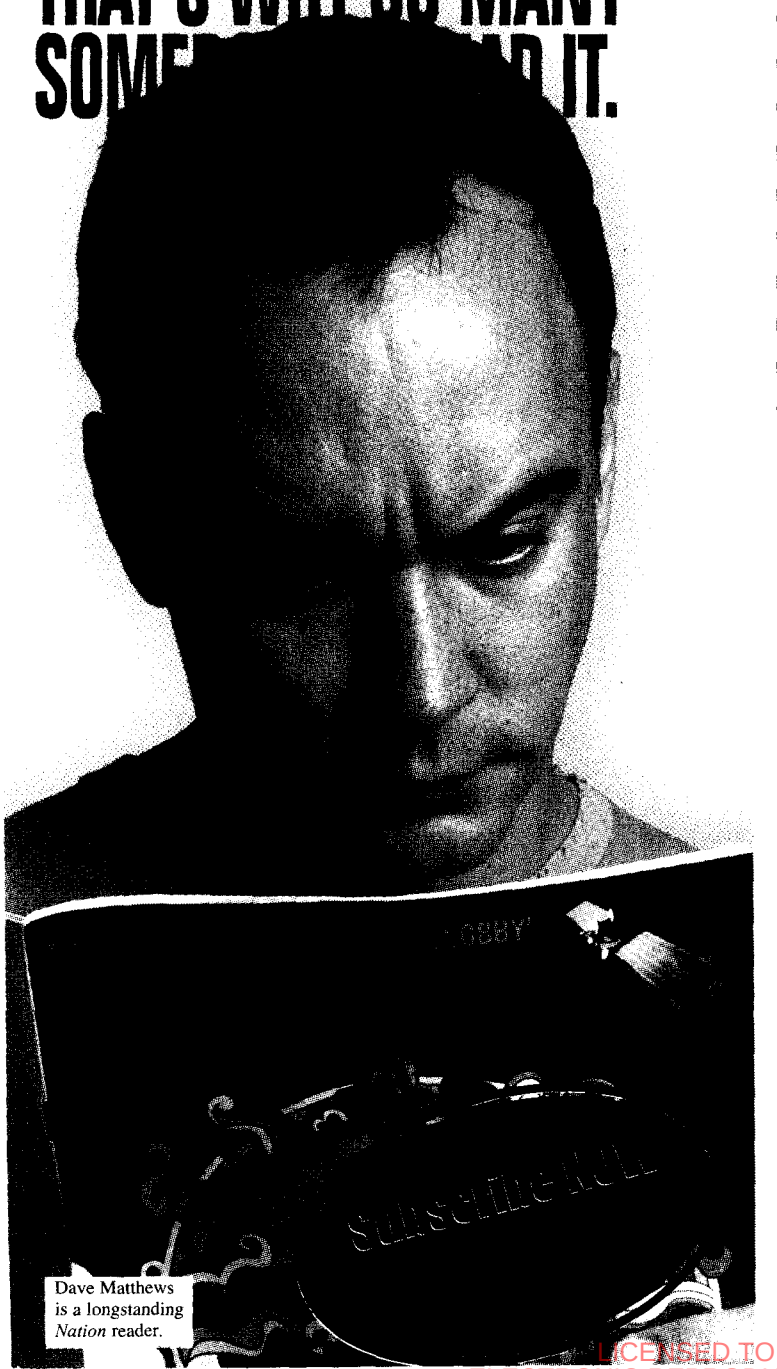
THAT'S WHY SO MANY SOM[illegible] IT.



Dave Matthews is a longstanding *Nation* reader.

packages with which we had paid *them* back for Pearl Harbor, were destined to return home someday. No wonder the single, omnipresent historical reference in the media in the wake of the attacks was Pearl Harbor or, as screaming headlines had it, INFAMY, or A NEW DAY OF INFAMY. We had just experienced "the Pearl Harbor of the 21st Century," or, as R. James Woolsey, former CIA director (and neocon), said in the *Washington Post* that first day, "It is clear now, as it was on December 7, 1941, that the United States is at war.... The question is: with whom?"

The Day After

No wonder that what came instantly to mind was a nuclear event. No wonder, according to a *New York Times* piece, Tom Brokaw, then chairing NBC's nonstop news coverage, "may have captured it best when he looked at videotape of people on a street, everything and everyone so covered with ash... [and said] it looked 'like a nuclear winter in lower Manhattan.'" No wonder the *Tennessean* and the *Topeka Capital-Journal* both used the headline THE DAY AFTER, lifted from a famous 1983 TV movie about nuclear Armageddon.

No wonder the area where the two towers fell was quickly dubbed "Ground Zero," a term previously reserved for the spot where an atomic explosion had occurred. On September 12, for example, the *Los Angeles Times* published a full-page series of illustrations of the attacks on the towers headlined: GROUND ZERO. By week's end, it had become the only name for "the collapse site," as in a September 18 *New York Times* headline, MANY COME TO BEAR WITNESS AT GROUND ZERO.

No wonder the events seemed so strangely familiar. We had been living with the possible return of our most powerful weaponry via TV and the movies, novels and our own dream-life, in the past, the future and even—thanks to a John F. Kennedy TV appearance on October 22, 1962, during the Cuban Missile crisis to tell us that our world might end tomorrow—in something like the almost-present.

So many streams of popular culture had fed into this. So many "previews" had been offered. Everywhere in those decades, you could see yourself or your compatriots or the enemy "Hiroshimated" (as *Variety* termed it back in 1947). Even when Arnold Schwarzenegger wasn't kissing Jamie Lee Curtis in *True Lies* as an atomic explosion went off somewhere in the Florida Keys or a playground filled with American kids wasn't being atomically blistered in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, even when it wasn't literally nuclear, that apocalyptic sense of destruction lingered as the train, bus, blimp, explosively armed, headed for us in our unknowing innocence; as the towering inferno, airport, city, White House was blasted away, as we were offered Pompeii-scapes of futuristic destruction in what would, post-9/11, come to be known as "the homeland."

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Sometimes it came from outer space armed with strange city-blasting rays; other times irradiated monsters rose from the depths to stomp our cities (in the 1998 remake of *Godzilla*, New York City, no less). After *Star Wars*' Darth Vader used his Death Star to pulverize a whole planet in 1977, planets were regularly nuclearized in Saturday-morning TV cartoons. In our imaginations, post-1945, we were always at planetary Ground Zero.

Dystopian Serendipity

Increasingly, from Hamburg to Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan, others were also watching our spectaculars, our catastrophes, our previews; and so, as Hollywood historian Neal Gabler would write in the *New York Times* only days after 9/11, they were ready to deliver what we had long dreamed of with the kind of timing—insuring, for instance, that the second plane arrived "at a decent interval" after the first so that the cameras could be in place—and in a visual language American viewers would understand.

But here's the catch: What came, when it came, on September 11, 2001, wasn't what we thought came. There was no Ground Zero, because there was nothing faintly atomic about the attacks. It wasn't the apocalypse at all. Except in its success, it hardly differed from the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, the one that almost toppled one tower with a rented Ryder van and a homemade bomb.

OK, the truck of 1993 had sprouted wings and gained all the power in those almost full, transcontinental jet fuel tanks, but otherwise what "changed everything," as the phrase would soon go, was a bit of dystopian serendipity for Al Qaeda: Nineteen men of much conviction and middling skills, armed with exceedingly low-tech weaponry and two hijacked jets, managed to create an apocalyptic look that, in another context, would have made the special-effects masters of Lucas's Industrial Light & Magic proud. And from that—and the Bush Administration's reaction to it—everything else would follow.

The tiny band of fanatics who planned September 11 essentially lucked out. If the testimony, under CIA interrogation techniques, of Al Qaeda's master planner Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is to be believed, what happened stunned even him. ("According to the [CIA] summary, he said he 'had no idea that the damage of the first attack would be as catastrophic as it was.'") Those two mighty towers came crumbling down in that vast, roiling, near-mushroom cloud of white smoke before the cameras in the fashion of the ultimate Hollywood action film (imagery multiplied in its traumatizing power by thousands of replays over a record-setting more than ninety straight hours of TV coverage). And that imagery fit perfectly the secret expectations of Americans—just as it fit the needs of both Al Qaeda and the Bush Administration.

That's undoubtedly why other parts of the story of that moment faded from sight. On the fifth anniversary of September 11, there will, for instance, be no memorial documentaries focusing on American Flight 77, which plowed into the Pentagon. That destructive but non-apocalyptic-looking attack didn't satisfy the same built-in expectations. Though the term "ground zero Washington" initially floated through the media ether, it never stuck.

Similarly, the unsolved anthrax murders-by-mail of almost the same moment, which caused a collective shudder of horror, are now forgotten. (According to a LexisNexis search, between October 4 and December 4, 2001, 260 stories appeared in the *New York Times* and 246 in the *Washington Post* with "anthrax" in the headline. That's the news equivalent of a high-pitched scream of horror.) Those envelopes, spilling highly refined anthrax powder and containing letters dated "9/11/01" with lines like "Death to America, Death to Israel, Allah Is Great," represented the only use of a weapon of mass destruction in this period; yet they were slowly eradicated from our collective (and media) memory once it became clearer that the perpetrators were probably homegrown killers, possibly out of the very cold war US weapons labs that produced so much WMD in the first place. It's a guarantee that the media will not be filled with memory pieces to the anthrax victims this October.

The 36-Hour War

Indulge me, then, for a moment on an otherwise grim subject. I've always been a fan of what-if history and, when younger, of science fiction. Recently I decided to take my own modest time machine back to September 11, 2001; or, to be more exact, the IRT subway on several overheated July afternoons to one of the cultural glories of my city, the New York Public Library, a building that—in the realm where sci-fi and what-if history meld—suffered its own monstrous "damage," its own 9/11, only months after the A-bombing of Hiroshima.

In November 1945, *Life* magazine published "The 36-Hour War," an overheated what-if tale in which an unnamed enemy in "equatorial Africa" launched a surprise atomic missile attack on the United States, resulting in 10 million deaths. A dramatic illustration accompanying the piece showed the library's two pockmarked stone lions still standing, guarding a ground-zero scene of almost total destruction, while heavily shielded technicians tested "the rubble of the shattered city for radioactivity."

I passed those same majestic lions, still standing (as was the library) in 2006, entered the microfiche room and began reading the *New York Times* as well as several other newspapers starting with the September 12, 2001, issues. Immediately I was plunged back into a hellish apocalypse. Vivid *Times* words and phrases from that first day: "gates of hell," "the unthinkable," "nightmare world of Hieronymus Bosch," "hellish storm of ash, glass, smoke, and leaping victims," "clamorous inferno," "an ashen shell of itself, all but a Pompeii." But one of the most common words over those days in the *Times* and elsewhere was "vulnerable" (or as a *Times* piece put it, "nowhere was safe"). The front page of the *Chicago Tribune* caught this mood in a headline, FEELING OF INVINCIBILITY SUDDENLY SHATTERED, and a lead sentence, "On Tuesday, America the invincible became America the vulnerable." We had faced "the kamikazes of the 21st century"—a Pearl Harborish phrase that would gain traction—and we had lost.

A thought came to mind as I slowly rolled those grainy microfiches; as I passed the photo of a man, in midair, falling headfirst from a WTC tower; as I read this observation from a Pearl Harbor survivor interviewed by the *Tribune*: "Things will never be the same again in this country"; as I reeled section by section, day by day toward our distinctly changed present;

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as I read all those words that boiled up like a linguistic storm around the photos of those hideous white clouds; as I considered all the op-eds and columns filled with all those instant opinions that poured into the pages of our papers before there was even time to think; as I noticed, buried in their pages, a raft of words and phrases—"preempt," "a new Department of Pre-emption [at the Pentagon]," "homeland defenses," "homeland security agency"—already lurking in our world, readying themselves to be noticed.

Among them all, the word that surfaced fastest on the heels of that "new Day of Infamy," and to deadliest effect, was "war." Senator John McCain, among many others, labeled the attacks "an act of war" on the spot, just as Republican Senator Richard Shelby insisted that "this is total war," just as the *Washington Post*'s columnist Charles Krauthammer started his first editorial that first day, "This is not crime. This is war." And they quickly found themselves in a milling crowd of potential war-makers, Democrats as well as Republicans, liberals as well as conservatives, even if the enemy remained as yet obscure.

On the night of September 11 the President himself, addressing the nation, already spoke of winning "the war against terrorism." By day two, he used the phrase "acts of war"; by day three, "the first war of the twenty-first century" (while the *Times* reported "a drumbeat for war" on television); by week's end, "the long war"; and the following week, in an address to a joint session of Congress, while announcing the creation of a Cabinet-level Office of Homeland Security, he wielded "war" twelve times. ("Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there.")

What If?

So here was my what-if thought. What if the two hijacked planes, American Flight 11 and United 175, had plunged into those north and south towers at 8:46 and 9:03, killing all aboard, causing extensive damage and significant death tolls, but neither tower had come down? What if, as a *Tribune* columnist called it, photogenic "scenes of apocalypse" had not been produced? What if, despite two gaping holes and the smoke and flames pouring out of the towers, the imagery had been closer to that of 1993? What if there had been no giant cloud of destruction capable of bringing to mind the look of "the day after," no images of crumbling towers worthy of *Independence Day*?

We would surely have had blazing headlines, but would they have commonly had "war" or "infamy" in them, as if we had been attacked by another state? Would the last superpower have gone from "invincible" to "vulnerable" in a split second? Would our newspapers instantly have been writing "before" and "after" editorials, or insisting that this moment was the ultimate "test" of George W. Bush's until-then languishing presidency? Would we instantaneously have been considering taking what CIA Director George Tenet would soon call "the shackles" off our intelligence agencies and the military? Would we have been reconsidering, as Florida's Democratic Senator Bob Graham suggested that first day, rescinding the Congressional ban on the assassination of foreign officials and heads of state? Would a *Washington Post* journalist have been trying within hours to name the kind of "war" we were in? (He provisionally labeled it "the Gray War.") Would *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman on the third day have had us deep into "World War III"? Would the *Times* have been headlining and quoting Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, on its front page on September 14, insisting that "it's not simply a matter of capturing people and holding them accountable, but removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, ending states who sponsor terrorism." (The *Times* editorial writers certainly noticed that ominous "s" on "states" and wrote the next day: "but we trust [Wolfowitz] does not have in mind invading Iraq, Iran, Syria and Sudan as well as Afghanistan.")

Would state-to-state "war" and "acts of terror" have been so quickly conjoined in the media as a "war on terror" and would that phrase have made it, in just over a week, into a major presidential address? Could the Los Angeles *Daily News* have produced the following four-day series of screaming headlines, beating even the President to the punch: TERROR/HORROR!/THIS IS WAR/WAR ON TERROR?

If it all hadn't seemed so familiar, wouldn't we have noticed what was actually new in the attacks of September 11? Wouldn't more people have been as puzzled as, according to Ron Suskind in his new book *The One Percent Doctrine*, was one reporter who asked White House press secretary Ari Fleischer, "You don't declare war against an individual, surely"? Wouldn't Congress have balked at passing, three days later, an almost totally open-ended resolution granting the President the right to use force not against one nation (Afghanistan) but against "nations," plural and unnamed?

And how well would the Bush Administration's fear-inspired nuclear agenda have worked, if those buildings hadn't come down? Would Saddam's supposed nuclear program and WMD stores have had the same impact? Would the endless linking of the Iraqi dictator, Al Qaeda and 9/11 have penetrated so deeply that, in 2006, half of all Americans, according to a Harris poll, still believed Saddam had WMD when the US invasion began, and 85 percent of American troops stationed in Iraq, according to a Zogby poll, believed the US mission there was mainly "to retaliate for Saddam's role in the 9-11 attacks"?

Without that apocalyptic 9/11 imagery, would those fantasy Iraqi mushroom clouds pictured by Administration officials rising over American cities or those fantasy Iraqi unmanned aerial vehicles capable of spraying our East Coast with chemical or biological weapons, or Saddam's supposed search for African yellowcake (or even, today, the Iranian "bomb" that won't exist for perhaps another decade, if at all) have so dominated American consciousness?

Would Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri be sitting in jail cells or be on trial by now? Would so many things have happened differently?

The Opportunity of a Lifetime

What if the attacks on September 11, 2001, had not been seen as a new Pearl Harbor? Only three months earlier, after all, Disney's *Pearl Harbor* (the "sanitized" version, as *Times* columnist Frank Rich labeled it), a blockbuster made with extensive Pentagon help, had performed disappointingly at the multiplexes. As an event, it seemed irrelevant to American

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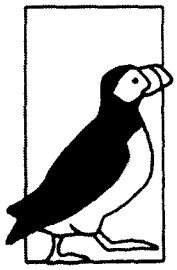

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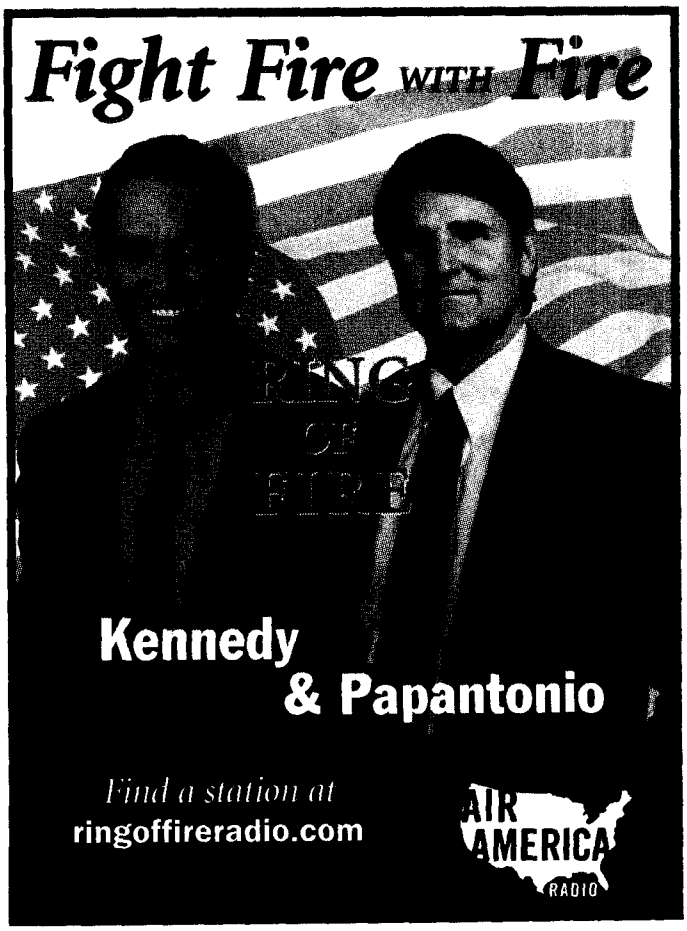

audiences until 9/11, when that ancient history—and the ancient retribution that went with it—wiped from the American brain the actual history of recent decades, including our massive covert anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan, out of which Osama bin Laden emerged.

Here's the greatest irony: From that time of triumph in 1945, Americans had always secretly suspected that they were not "invincible" but exceedingly vulnerable, something both pop culture and the deepest fears of the cold war era only reinforced. Confirmation of that fact arrived with such immediacy on September 11 largely because it was already a gut truth. The ambulance chasers of the Bush Administration, who spotted such opportunity in the attacks, were perhaps the last Americans who hadn't absorbed this reality.

As that New Day of Infamy scenario played out, the horrific but actual scale of the damage inflicted in New York and Washington (and to the US economy) would essentially recede. The attack had been relatively small, limited in its means and massive only in its daring and luck—abetted by the fact that the Bush Administration was looking for nothing like such an attack, despite that CIA briefing given to Bush on a lazy August day in Crawford ("Bin Ladin Determined To Strike in US") and so many other clues.

Only the week before 9/11 the Bush Administration had been in the doldrums with a "detached," floundering President criticized by worried members of his own party for vacationing far too long at his Texas ranch while the nation drifted. Moreover, there was only one group before September 11 with a "new Pearl Harbor" scenario on the brain. Major Administration figures, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz, had wanted for years to radically increase the power of the President and the Pentagon, to roll back the power of Congress (especially any Congressional restraints on the presidency left over from the Vietnam/Watergate era) and to complete the overthrow of Saddam Hussein ("regime change"), aborted by the first Bush Administration in 1991.

We know as well that some of those plans were on the table in the 1990s and that those who held them and promoted them, at the Project for the New American Century in particular, actually wrote in a proposal titled "Rebuilding America's Defenses" that "the process of transformation [of the Pentagon], even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor."

We also know that within hours of the 9/11 attacks, many of the same people were at work on the war of their dreams. Within five hours of the attack on the Pentagon, Rumsfeld was urging his aides to come up with plans for striking Iraq. (Notes by an aide transcribe his wishes this way: "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] at same time. Not only UBL [Osama bin Laden].... Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not.")

We know that by the 12th, the President himself had collared his top counterterrorism adviser on the National Security Council, Richard Clarke, and some of his staff in a conference

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room next to the White House Situation Room and demanded linkages. ("'Look under every rock and do due diligence.' It was a very intimidating message which said, 'Iraq. Give me a memo about Iraq and 9/11.'") We know that by November, the top officials of the Administration were already deep into operational planning for an invasion of Iraq.

And they weren't alone. Within the Pearl Harbor/nuclear attack/war nexus that emerged almost instantly from the ruins of the World Trade Center, others were working feverishly. Only eight days after the attacks, for instance, the complex 342-page Patriot Act would be rushed over to Congress by Attorney General John Ashcroft, passed through a cowed Senate in the dead of night on October 11, unread by at least some of our Representatives, and signed into law on October 26. As its instant appearance indicated, it was made up of a set of already existing right-wing hobbyhorses, quickly drafted provisions and expansions of law enforcement powers taken off an FBI "wish list" (previously rejected by Congress). All these were swept together by people who, like the President's men on Iraq, saw their main chance when those buildings went down. As such, it stands in for much of what happened "in response" to 9/11.

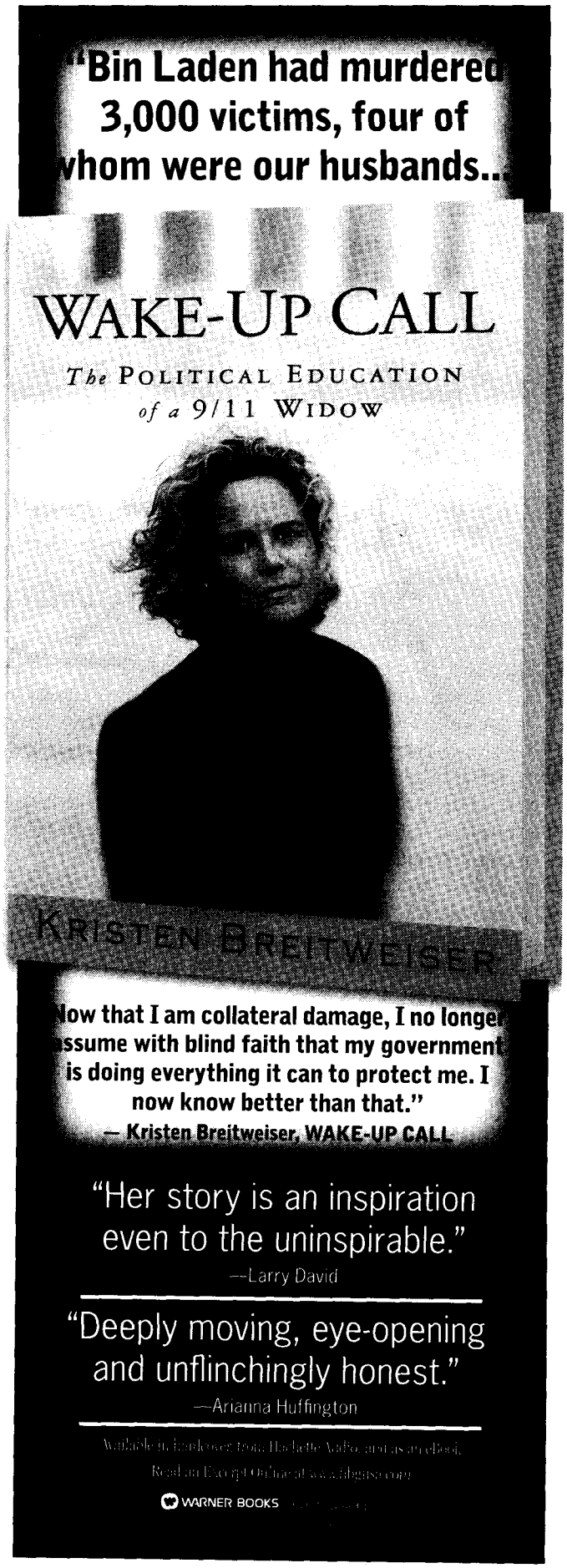
But what if we hadn't been waiting so long for our own thirty-six-hour war in the most victorious nation on the planet, its sole "hyperpower," its new Rome? What if those pre-existing frameworks hadn't been quite so well primed to emerge in no time at all? What if we (and our enemies as well) hadn't been at the movies all those years?

Movie-Made Planet

Among other things, we've been left with a misbegotten "billion dollar" memorial to the attacks of 9/11 (recently recalibrated to $500 million) planned for New York's Ground Zero and sporting the kinds of cost overruns otherwise associated with the occupation of Iraq. In its ambitions, what it will really memorialize is the Bush Administration's oversized, crusading moment that followed the attacks. Too late now—and no one asked me anyway—but I know what my memorial would have been.

A few days after 9/11, my daughter and I took a trip downtown, as close to "Ground Zero" as you could get. With the air still rubbing our throats raw, we wandered block after block, peering down side streets to catch glimpses of the sheer enormity of the destruction. And indeed, in a way that no small screen could communicate, it did have the look of the apocalyptic, especially those giant shards of fallen building sticking up like—remember, I'm a typical movie-made American on an increasingly movie-made planet and had movies on the brain that week—the image of the wrecked Statue of Liberty that chillingly ends the first *Planet of the Apes* film, that cinematic memorial to humanity's nuclear folly. Left there as it was, that would have been a sobering monument for the ages, not just to the slaughter that was 9/11 but to what we had awaited for so long—and what, sadly, we still wait for; what, in the world that George Bush has produced, has become ever more, rather than less, likely. And imagine our reaction then.

Safer? Don't be ridiculous. ■


"Bin Laden had murdered
3,000 victims, four of
whom were our husbands..
WAKE-UP CALL
The POLITICAL EDUCATION
of a 9/11 WIDOW
KRISTEN BREITWEISER
Now that I am collateral damage, I no longer
assume with blind faith that my government
is doing everything it can to protect me. I
now know better than that."
— Kristen Breitweiser, WAKE-UP CALL
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even to the uninspirable."
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and unflinchingly honest."
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WARNER BOOKS

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IN THE PAST HALF-DECADE, A NEW PREJUDICE HAS BEEN CONCOCTED OUT OF OLD-TIME RELIGIOUS CHAUVINISM, ETHNIC BIGOTRY AND A HEFTY DOSE OF POLITICAL REPRESSION.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Arab America's September 11

MOUSTAFA BAYOUMI

Sade and four of his twentysomething friends sit at a hookah cafe almost underneath the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in Brooklyn. It's late, but the summer heat is strong and hangs in the air. They sit on the sidewalk in a circle, water pipes bubbling between their white plastic chairs.

Sade is upset. He recently found out that his close friend of almost four years was an undercover police detective sent to spy on him, his friends and his community. Even the guy's name, Kamil Pasha, was fake, which really irked the 24-year-old Palestinian-American. After appearing as a surprise witness at a recent terrorism trial in Brooklyn, Pasha vanished. That's when Sade (who doesn't want his last name used) discovered the truth.

"I was very hurt," he says. "Was it friendship or was he doing his job?" He takes a puff from his water pipe. "I felt betrayed." The smoke comes out thick and smells like apples. "How could I not have seen this? The guy had four bank accounts! He was always asking for a receipt wherever we went. He had an empty apartment: a treadmill, a TV and a mattress. No food, no wardrobe." He shakes his head. "We were stupid not to figure it out."

Informants and spies are regular conversation topics in the age of terror, a time when friendships are tested, trust disappears and tragedy becomes comedy. "You have to know the family," Sade says. He goes around the circle. "His mother is my aunt. I've known him since I was in second grade. I know where his family lives, and he's also my cousin," he says, ticking off each person in turn. He gets to me. "You I'm not so sure about!" he says, and all the young men laugh loudly.

If questioning friendship isn't enough, Sade has also had other problems to deal with. He quit his Wall Street job last year because of all the anti-Arab and anti-Muslim invectives slung at him. He's happier now in a technology firm owned and staffed by other hyphenated Americans, but the past five years have taken their toll. I ask him about life after September 11 for Arab-Americans. "We're the new blacks," he says. "You know that, right?"

Sade's comment points to the persistent racism of the past half-decade, a new prejudice concocted out of old-time religious chauvinism, classic ethnic bigotry and a hefty dose of political repression. Arabs, South Asians and Muslims around the country have had to deal with a series of laws, executive orders and policing strategies—dubbed "designer" laws by some American Muslims—that target them almost exclusively. Many have become accustomed to drawing links with the wartime fate of Japanese-Americans.

But "designer" laws produce more than historical comparisons. Japanese internment occurred at a time in American history when Asian exclusion laws were still on the books. Jim Crow was alive, and racism was formally a part of the American system. Today's "war on terror," by contrast, plays out in our post–civil rights era. In a society that mouths the virtues of multiculturalism, the present war has legislatively produced the first virtual "race" for the twenty-first century, the Muslim race.

Today the government uses both political repression and cultural fearmongering against Arabs, South Asians and Muslims in the United States. Through its "designer" laws, the Bush Administration seeks to isolate and restructure these communities by creating a broad category of suspicion based almost exclusively on the combination of national origin, ethnicity and religion.

Consider how it has played out. First there was the preven-

Moustafa Bayoumi, co-editor of The Edward Said Reader *(Vintage), teaches at Brooklyn College, CUNY, and is writing a book about Arab-Americans.*

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tive detention of 5,000 men, grabbed because of birthplace. Then the government sought 19,000 "voluntary" interviews between the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The program of "Special Registration," begun a year after 9/11, required the interviewing and fingerprinting of more than 170,000 men from twenty-four Muslim-majority countries (and North Korea). Special Registration initiated deportation proceedings for almost 14,000 more people. Not one of these initiatives produced a single terrorism conviction, but together they served as theatrics purporting to show that the government is fighting the war vigorously at home, especially by clearing the nation of thousands of its Muslims.

Five major Muslim charities have been shut down through enforcement of the Patriot Act, even though the authorities have never shown any significant evidence of terror financing by any US-based charity, according to OMB Watch. Most recently, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) was reduced to collecting dry rice, cooking oil and diapers to send to the afflicted in Lebanon. Supplies were distributed instead of cash because "of the severe restrictions currently placed on financial aid by the U.S. government," CAIR said. Spokesman Ibrahim Hooper told the *Washington Post*, "If you send lentils, at least no one can accuse you of supporting terrorism."

And many Arab and Muslim immigrants applying for American citizenship are hitting an invisible wall. Mustafa Aziz, an Afghan who served for four years in the US Air Force, is one. He's the lead plaintiff in a recently filed class-action suit against the government for delaying naturalization petitions from Arabs and South Asians. The law requires immigration officials to decide within 120 days. Aziz and others have been waiting up to four years to hear about their future.

This is a partial list, but the effects are clear: increasing domestic discrimination against Arab, South Asian and Muslim

A Light in Brooklyn

The domestic "war on terror" plays out mostly in ethnic enclaves, such as in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, home to a large Arab-American population. Within days of the 2001 attacks, a sense of crisis had spread through the community. The firebombing of a local mosque had been narrowly averted. Women in hijab were being attacked. Vandals had driven by a local Muslim school and lobbed pork chops at the kids in the yard.

"We found ourselves in the middle of the chaos," said Ahmad Jaber, a Palestinian-American obstetrician and lodestone of the community. "People were hiding and scared, and we needed to protect them, to show courage and to act as role models."

But the only social-service organization for Arab-Americans in Bay Ridge, the Arab-American Association of New York, was just getting off the ground when the terrorist attacks happened. Dr. Jaber is one of its founders. "We were pushed to be more active before we were fully prepared," he acknowledged. Faced with the crisis, the association's board met weekly to plan strategy, and others pooled resources and talents. An attorney offered legal help, and mental health professionals offered free counseling. When someone donated a couch, a group of people heaved it up the building's creaky staircase and plopped it on the floor, and the doors of the organization were flung wide open. By December, clients were pouring in. The founders had been aware of the growing need for social services but were shocked to discover how deeply the attacks and their aftermath had scarred the psyche of the community.

Five years later the association has grown into a hub of the neighborhood while laboring under the effects of punitive national security policies. It has helped more than 2,000 people and runs an ESL program, a health program and a youth camp. It mostly serves women and children. While this is true for most social-welfare organizations, the gender divide is especially pronounced here because much of the domestic "war on terror" directly targets men, breaking up families and leaving many children and wives to survive without fathers and husbands.

Among the association's first clients were September 11 families (several members of Brooklyn's Arab-American community were killed on that day). It dealt concurrently with the hate crimes that kept women at home and children too frightened to go to school. It organized volunteers as escorts to help people out of their houses. Soon people began reporting that men were disappearing from the community. The association organized visits to detention centers and helped families and lawyers search for vanishing men. (The violent abuse many of them suffered in detention later came to light.) Next came "Special Registration," another post–September 11 initiative aimed at Arab and Muslim men; it cleared the streets of even more community members.

Dr. Jaber estimates that the various national security initiatives, along with growing fear and racism, are responsible for thinning Bay Ridge's Arab community by 20 percent since September 11.

"It was devastating to have the community attacked," says Faozia Aljibawi, a caseworker at the association. But, she says, "September 11 also brought the community together, regardless of religion or national origin." From the beginning, the association worked closely with Salam Lutheran Church and the Islamic Society of Bay Ridge. "We were all being attacked as Arabs," Aljibawi said. It held legal rights workshops and developed liaisons with other community organizations, interfaith groups and the police. The unity and outreach seemed to be turning an insufferable period into something bearable.

Other results were hidden and less auspicious. Youths came to the association suffering socially and academically. High school teachers were often problems. "One student came to us in tears," another caseworker said. "She had been asked to write an essay for school about 'why Arabs hate America.'" Many stopped speaking Arabic in public and tried to pass as Latino.

Informers have also left a corrosive legacy. While the association offers leadership to the community, many people are now afraid to attend public functions or voice political opinions loudly. "We have unity," Aljibawi sighs, "but no security."

—M.B.

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WHAT DEMOCRATS
THIS TINHORN ME

YOU CAN'T BEAT SOMETHING WITH NOTHING.

Twelve years ago Newton Leroy Gingrich assembled an army of well-scrubbed young Republicans, equipped them with a ten-point "Contract with America" and sent them out to do battle with Democrats. All they accomplished was to win 53 seats, take over the House, and turn Bill Clinton into a Republican.

1994 was not unlike today. A President loses the confidence of the people. There's a queasy, spreading sense of gloom: Is the country going to hell? But that similarity does not entirely explain Gingrich's success.

Gingrich succeeded because he honored the First Law of Competition: You can't beat something with nothing. He gave his minions ideas. They were old ideas. They were bad ideas. But they were not nothing.

A PLATFORM THAT IS NOT A PLATFORM BED

Democrats: You need ideas. Without ideas you appear clueless as to how to fix the country.

Go to our website: AvengingAngels.org. There you'll find not the usual platform bed with its usual loud sounds of snoring. You'll find ten solid, vigorous, popular proposals for change.

These planks are not nailed down. Borrow any ones you like. Then go out and fight for them. With rancor.

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CAN LEARN FRO... ALOMANIAC.

3 CHEERS FOR "RANCOROUS PARTISANSHIP"

"Rancorous partisanship," decried by Bill Clinton and other centrists, is just another name for conviction. Conviction isn't a quality Bill Clinton ever had much use for. He's a man who never fought for a damned thing in his life. But conviction is what Democrats need today. A better role model would be that earlier adulterer, Franklin Roosevelt, who said "There is nothing I love as much as a good fight!" and who gladly welcomed the hatred of his enemies.

THE DEEP IGNORANCE OF GEORGE W. BUSH

John Kerry's campaign failed because of his inability to deliver a cohesive indictment of the President's wretched record. Was there no common denominator to Bush's failures? Of course there was one. There still is one. It is ignorance.

The President ignored the redundant warnings of 9/11. He ignored the onslaught of Katrina. He ignores global warming. He ignores the coming end of oil. He ignores the outpouring of rage from a billion Muslims. He ignores the vast debts he is running up. He embraces the retrograde cant of the worst Evangelical Right ignoramuses. Worst of all, he ignores the obvious lesson that wars aren't working anymore. He offers us only perpetual debt, perpetual fear, perpetual war.

You and I may survive his ignorance. Our children will not. We must win this election.

www.AvengingAngels.org

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Americans powered less by historical hierarchies of race and more by a contemporary foreign policy that they can't influence. While the "war on terror" has clearly repressed the political rights of many in the United States, it is unimpeachably true that it has isolated and limited the liberties and speech specifically of Arabs, Muslims and South Asians. Eyed suspiciously as fifth columnists hiding sedition behind the five pillars of Islam, Muslims are unfairly held responsible as a group for the actions of any other Muslim worldwide. They are treated as guilty until proven innocent, and their guilt is premised almost exclusively on their birthplace or birth religion.

It might sound familiar. Guilt by association recalls the red-baiting of McCarthyism, but in fact the cold war performed better on racial justice than the "war on terror" does. The cold war spawned massive political repression at home and divided the world into violent spheres of influence. But its global agenda could not keep America's domestic politics isolated. From Truman to Johnson, Presidents had to confront the contradiction that the government advocated freedom abroad while maintaining segregation at home. Since American activists and international critics focused the world's attention on the country's legally enshrined racial discrimination, successive administrations felt their grip on America's global narrative of progress could slip at any time.

Guilt by association recalls McCarthyist red-baiting, but the cold war performed better on racial justice than the 'war on terror' does.

Accomplishments were needed, according to Mary Dudziak, who reveals in *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* that key racial justice reforms, from the end of World War II until the Johnson Administration, were undertaken significantly as foreign policy gestures. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was decided specifically with an eye toward improving the US reputation abroad. After Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the US Information Agency propagandized that the new law would enhance "the international influence of the United States."

What a difference a war makes. Domestic racial justice expanded during the cold war out of the exigencies of global leadership and global competition. But the "war on terror," likewise rich with a rhetoric to export "freedom," does precisely the opposite. It deliberately curbs the rights of Muslims as a group to show the rest of the country and the world how to be "tough on terror." The model continues to be adopted by much of the West.

The parallels and paradoxes with regard to the cold war go deeper still. Beginning in the 1950s, the State Department sought to counter the nagging international press reports of domestic racism through extensive propaganda efforts. The department dispatched prominent African-American jazz musicians around the world to showcase the wonders of American racial and musical harmony. (The musicians often wouldn't play by the rules, as Penny Von Eschen shows in her book *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War.*)

In June similar ideas again lit up the State Department. Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes recruited four Muslim American "civilian ambassadors" to travel to Europe and display how warmly the United States welcomes its Muslims. According to Radio Free Europe, the State Department aimed to show the world that the United States offers its Muslims "democratic values with opportunities and freedom beyond their dreams."

But the dream life of Muslims is not really the issue. Nor is the question of whether American Muslims have more freedom than their co-religionists do in Europe or elsewhere. The question really is whether Muslims as a group have the same opportunity to practice their faith and exercise their rights as other Americans do. With the restrictions on their speech, giving and immigration, their pervasive anxiety about voicing unpopular opinions and the reach of police informants where there is no reason to suspect illegal activity, the answer must be a resounding no.

And five years on in the "war on terror," national attitudes continue to harden. The figures are depressing. Thirty-nine percent of Americans admit to holding prejudice against Muslims, according to a July USA Today/Gallup Poll. The same percentage of respondents think Muslims—US citizens included—should carry special IDs. And more than one in five doesn't want Muslims as neighbors.

Meanwhile, knowledge about Islam remains as elusive as the moon's green cheese, despite the laudable efforts by local and national Muslim organizations to educate the broader public. Almost 60 percent of all Americans have never met a Muslim. One in ten thinks Muslims believe in a moon god.

All this leaves Arab-Americans like myself beleaguered but not surprised. Since 1971 the government has illegally listened in on our conversations, infiltrated our political organizations, detained our members on "secret" evidence, spied on our leaders (including Edward Said) and arrested people for distributing pro-Palestinian literature that was available in public libraries (the infamous LA8 case). All of this was done to cement American policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But there's a difference between the earlier period and today. Before 2001 the government focused its efforts almost exclusively on immigrants and activists and especially on immigrant activists. Today, group membership alone, through national origin, religion or ethnicity, suffices as grounds for legal and cultural suspicion.

The challenge is not to be maudlin about our fate. I for one understand that what has happened within the United States still pales in comparison with the destruction wrought overseas by this idiotic "war on terror," a campaign that simplifies real politics to caricature and marshals political violence in the name of eliminating political violence. Since the government has viewed us largely with suspicion rather than affection, perhaps proof has finally been found for the maxim that it is better to be feared than to be loved. It is after all with great proclamations of concern that the "war on terror" exports "liberty" to Iraq and beyond. Suspicion may be painful, but liberation? That has proved catastrophic. ■

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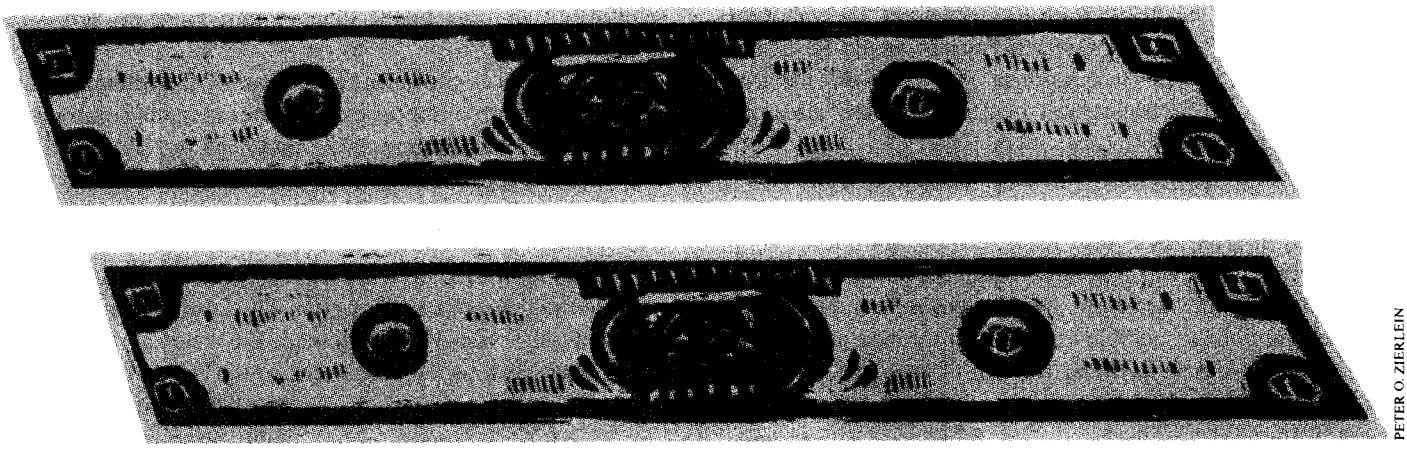
RUDY GIULIANI'S SECOND TERM WAS AN ESCALATING DISASTER. THEN CAME SEPTEMBER 11, AND NEW YORK'S MAYOR BECAME THE HOTTEST BUSINESS AND POLITICAL PROPERTY AROUND.



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Cashing In on Catastrophe

WAYNE BARRETT AND DAN COLLINS

Even before he left office as New York City's mayor at the end of 2001, Rudolph Giuliani was telling reporters about Giuliani Partners, the management consulting firm he intended to open up with his old City Hall team. The partners were more of a Giuliani posse than a group of peers. Michael Hess, the former city corporation counsel, was named managing partner. Fire Commissioner Tom Von Essen became a senior partner, as did Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, whose later nomination as head of Homeland Security would go down in flames after revelations that his concern for following the rules and avoiding ethical conflicts appeared close to nonexistent. The only partner who came from outside the City Hall crowd was Roy Bailey, former finance chair of the Republican Party of Texas, who'd gotten to know Giuliani when he helped raise money for Giuliani's abortive 2000 Senate campaign against Hillary Clinton. Bailey helped finance the new company, whose reported start-up payroll was $10 million a year.

The most valuable commodity the new company had to sell was not management expertise but the aura of America's Mayor—the man whose cool-headed 9/11 leadership had taken on mythic proportions. While Giuliani's first term as mayor brought him renown as a crime fighter who made New York livable again, his second term was a slowly escalating disaster before 9/11. The city, which admired his feisty stubbornness when the enemies were drug dealers and cop killers, had grown tired of a seemingly endless series of political catfights with school chancellors, black neighborhoods, museums, rival politicians and even hot-dog vendors. And, as would become clear later, Giuliani had allowed the city to meet the disaster unprepared in myriad ways, ignoring the well-noted lessons of the first attack on the towers, which occurred less than a year before he became mayor.

Now, with Giuliani traveling the country as a 2008 Republican presidential hopeful, his record both as mayor and afterward is coming under increasing scrutiny. In no area is there more to examine than in the story of Giuliani Partners.

Giuliani Partners' initial press releases religiously avoided any mention of the attacks—Rudy is described as the man who "returned accountability to city government and improved the quality of life for all New Yorkers." But when their clients, who were very frequently companies in trouble, told the world they had just hired a renowned team of "crisis managers," no one pretended their critical expertise came from handling snowstorms or subway fires.

Before long, Giuliani Partners was all over the map, consulting on security for nuclear power plants one day, on efficient bulk purchasing for New York–area hospitals another. It signed on to help the troubled, scandal-plagued WorldCom establish a "model form of corporate governance" and to help Delta Airlines with its bankruptcy. It agreed to review the National Thoroughbred Racing Association's electronic betting systems after a race-fixing scandal. It formed a series of investment alliances that purchased interests in everything from a Tokyo wind-power company to a California firm, CamelBak, which made backpacks with sipping tubes for people like long-distance bikers and soldiers in desert postings. (Kerik was enthusiastic; it was "a perfect mechanism to stay hydrated," he told the *Daily News*, envisioning every New York City firefighter equipped with a CamelBak as a matter of course. "If I was a fireman I'd want one.")

The Partners also rekindled relationships with some old friends who played central roles in some of the biggest city fail-

Wayne Barrett is a senior editor at the Village Voice *and author of* Rudy! An Investigative Biography of Rudolph Giuliani. *Dan Collins is senior producer for CBSNews.com. This article is adapted from* Grand Illusion: The Untold Story of Rudy Giuliani and 9/11, *just published by HarperCollins.* *Anna Lenzer was the research assistant for the book. Research support was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

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ures on 9/11. Among them was a "strategic partnership" with CB Richard Ellis, the successor of the firm that had found the city the perfect location for a command center—high above lower Manhattan in one of the World Trade Center towers. The announcement of the deal, in which Giuliani Partners would be advising Ellis on "location and site assessment" as well as on emergency preparedness and fire safety, was made without any discernible sense of irony.

Cashing in on 9/11 took many forms. In 2004 Giuliani Partners signed up Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, which was concerned about the popularity of drug re-importation. American pharmaceutical companies sold their product at much lower prices in Canada and Europe, where national price controls were in effect. The big profits came in the United States, where Congress had vigilantly guarded the drug manufacturers' right to charge what the market would bear. But American senior citizens had begun taking bus trips to Canada to buy their medication, and, in a far more ominous development for the drug companies, members of Congress were talking about making it legal to import cheaper prescription drugs from across the border. PhRMA wanted Giuliani Partners to prepare a report on the safety of these practices.

If there was any doubt that Giuliani Partners was all about 9/11, it was erased by the Nextel deal.

The report found re-importation to be a bad and dangerous thing. "As the nation tightens its borders against possible future terrorist attacks, it risks undermining security and safety by opening them to non-FDA approved prescription drugs," the Giuliani study concluded. Giuliani himself testified before two Senate committees. When the public was invited to take its turn to testify before a federal task force studying drug importation, one of the first speakers was Kerik, who raised the possibility that terrorists could send weapons of biological warfare across the border disguised as prescription drugs.

Entergy Nuclear Northeast hired Giuliani Partners to evaluate emergency planning and security systems around its five nuclear plants in the Northeast, including Indian Point, north of New York City, which were always under the sharp and hostile glare of the communities in which they were located. Then, when Hurricane Katrina struck, Entergy was happy to announce that Giuliani Partners was going "to counsel the company in coping with the aftermath," which included trying to get its New Orleans electric utility back in operation. In making the announcement, J. Wayne Leonard, the chief executive officer, said, "Rudy Giuliani is a proven leader and his team of experts are probably the most acclaimed crisis managers in the world." Not only was New Orleans getting the attention of Rudy himself, the press release noted, but also that of a team of experts in this sort of catastrophe. All this consulting firepower was not enough, however, to keep Entergy New Orleans from declaring bankruptcy right after the hurricane, or to get power back to large swaths of the city, which were still without electricity months after the hurricane struck.

While such deals may have raised a few eyebrows, they don't compare with Nextel. Indeed, if there was any doubt that Giuliani Partners was all about 9/11, it was erased by the Nextel deal. Nextel was one of the firm's first and most lucrative customers, forming what the Partners called a "strategic alliance to significantly improve public safety communications across the United States."

The theme was consistent and clear: "On September 11th, we learned the true importance of interoperable communications. It was a chaotic scene at Ground Zero, but if it weren't for Nextel providing us with interoperable communications tools, it might have been worse." This pitch was so much the core of the Giuliani Partners message that partner Richie Sheirer was quoted as repeating it word for word at Nextel-sponsored public safety conferences in Washington, DC, and St. Louis in the spring of 2003. Tom Von Essen made the identical statement at yet another Nextel-sponsored event, at the Hilton hotel in New York City. Nextel echoed the point, describing how it had distributed thousands of cell phones at both Ground Zero and the Pentagon (along with mobile cellphone masts to get them working) and how "with local phones jamming and telephone and power main stations down, Nextel's Direct Connect service and two-way messaging remained working throughout the entire crisis, recovery and clean-up."

But Nextel's role in emergency service communications in New York was far from universally positive. It was, in fact, so problematic you'd have thought Giuliani would have left office with a bad taste in his mouth for the entire product line. The city was a big Nextel client when Rudy was mayor, leasing its phones for agencies from the Police Department to the Board of Education to the Office of Emergency Management. But as Nextel phones and equipment became omnipresent, the system developed a stunning, even life-threatening, glitch. The engineering tricks that allowed co-founder Morgan O'Brien to brag that Nextel had managed to stuff 8 million subscribers on a spectrum that was supposed to have a ceiling of 1 million also had a troubling side effect: The infrastructure created interference. In communities across the country, including New York City, Nextel signals were causing those in adjacent frequencies to drop or become garbled to the point of incomprehensibility.

While no one can establish that Nextel caused interference on 9/11, there is good reason to wonder. Five days after the attack, a lawyer representing the city e-mailed the FCC about the deployment of all the Nextel equipment at Ground Zero—particularly mobile cell masts—and observed that if Nextel and the city didn't coordinate closely, "it is highly probable that Nextel will disrupt these other critical communications." Another city attorney testified at a subsequent Senate hearing that the city and others in a communications coalition held teleconferences twice a day right after 9/11 to "monitor and, if necessary, remedy any interference," focusing especially on Nextel. Even the company acknowledges that interference with public safety communications increased with the kind of explosion of cellular use that occurred on 9/11. There are also indications that the World Trade Center might have been a particular source of Nextel interference. John Paleski, president of Subcarrier

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Communications, which managed sites atop the WTC, said Nextel had several pieces of interference-generating equipment there, including digital and analog antennas. While those antennas were probably knocked out from the moment the planes hit, Nextel apparently had a lot of similar equipment nearby.

In fact, the company had so much disruptive equipment in the area that a year after 9/11 it was still a public safety headache. Giuliani led the commemorative services at Ground Zero on September 11, 2002, even while his largest client, Nextel, made the city's interagency communications at the site so "inoperable" during the ceremony that the Bloomberg administration filed a complaint against the company that used precisely that word.

Giuliani Partners was not hired to defend Nextel's performance, however. It was retained instead to stress how important it was to protect the public from Nextel interference, and to promote the company's own self-serving solution. Only a few weeks after the attack, Nextel filed a proposal with the FCC, beating its own chest about the need to end its interfering ways. It offered to surrender some of its 800-megahertz frequencies to public safety, cutting the interference. In exchange, it wanted new, continuous spectrum from the FCC estimated to be worth a minimum of $4.9 billion. On May 2, 2002, when Giuliani announced his company's partnership with Nextel, the former mayor talked about the interference problem: "Giuliani Partners is committed to helping resolve these concerns and improving the ability of public safety authorities to speak with one another during both day-to-day operations and crisis situations." He also told the New York *Daily News* that he had reviewed the varied plans for fixing the problem and had decided that Nextel's was the best—"without any doubt."

Giuliani Partners attempts to present itself as part of Giuliani's fight for justice. But clients patently hope to cash in on his fame.

As part of his Nextel duties, Giuliani appeared at conventions of public safety officials to talk about 9/11 and the need for antiterrorism preparedness. In his keynote speech at the convention of the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International in Nashville in 2002, for instance, he delivered his standard talk on 9/11 and his five principles for leadership, one of which was communication. Communication reminded Giuliani of the importance of being able to get through on the telephone in a time of crisis. "I am in favor of your support for the consensus proposal before the FCC that would allow public safety to have more frequencies and better communications," he said. "Thanks to you and Nextel who agreed on that. It can be positive for the future." A trade journal covering the convention called Giuliani "engaging, funny, seemingly honest and informative," but noted that "he never mentioned his consulting company's link to Nextel."

After forcing some changes in the Nextel plan, APCO and other public safety organizations rallied behind it, and it was artfully redubbed the Consensus Plan. But Giuliani and the Partners were also making friends at the FCC, doing volunteer jobs that had been brokered by Nextel's counsel. The Partners spent more than a year helping the FCC prepare a report about how local government can best communicate with the public. Sheirer, Von Essen and another Giuliani partner, Tony Carbonetti, attended a meeting of the FCC's Media Security and Reliability Council just as Nextel hired their firm in May 2002, and another partner, Tom Fitzpatrick, who spearheaded the New York Fire Department's disastrous radio contracting process, moderated an FCC panel. Finally, Giuliani himself was named to a prestigious FCC advisory council two months before the Nextel deal was approved.

"Everybody knows what we're doing, so there's nothing hidden," Giuliani told the *New York Times*, in explaining why he had not registered as a lobbyist for Nextel or anyone else. Actually, few did know what he was doing. Giuliani, for example, pushed his bandwidth crusade before the 9/11 Commission and in television interviews without ever acknowledging his interest. Two months before the FCC vote on the spectrum deal in July 2004, Giuliani called for "a dedicated bandwidth for emergency services" on *Larry King Live* and CBS as the solution to the 9/11 communications breakdown. He didn't specifically refer to the Nextel deal, saying only that the bandwidth was "doable but the FCC has to approve it."

By the time Giuliani made these appearances, his consulting deal with Nextel had come to an end, but the Partners still may have had the stock options, then valued at $15 million, that they received as part of their compensation. Shortly after the company got its new spectrum without the public auction usually required for such FCC largesse, Sprint merged with it in a $36 billion deal. Between 2002 and 2004, Nextel's stock rose nearly tenfold, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Giuliani Partners is a private company, and one that keeps its dealings very close to the vest. Conventional wisdom, encouraged by Giuliani Partners insiders, holds that the firm made around $100 million a year, or more than $2 million per employee. Giuliani had never seemed particularly concerned about money—he wouldn't have been scheming so desperately for a third $195,000-a-year term as mayor if wealth had been his top priority. But his sudden riches came in handy. His settlement with his former wife, Donna Hanover, in the summer of 2002 called for him to pay her $6.8 million over three years as well as child support. Hanover's lawyers estimated that Giuliani's income in 2002 was $20 million, a little more than half from speaking fees and book advances. And he quickly adapted to his new lifestyle, demanding first-class flights and accommodations for himself and his posse when he traveled and purchasing a $4 million summer house in the Hamptons for himself and Judy Nathan, whom he married in 2003. The couple also have an apartment on Manhattan's East Side worth more than $5 million, complete with Rudy's Yankee diamond rings displayed in wooden boxes, a lithograph of Winston Churchill above the fireplace, two white Churchill porcelain figures and a Joe DiMaggio shirt encased in glass.

Giuliani Partners attempts to present itself as just another vehicle for Rudy Giuliani's fight for justice. "We take these things on if there's good to be done," said Michael Hess. But most of the deals it has made were like the Nextel one—patently about a

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client's hope to cash in on Giuliani's fame, to borrow a little of his crime-fighting aura or to make use of the Partners' many connections in the increasingly profitable business of homeland security. Rick Perkal, a senior managing director at Bear Stearns Merchant Banking, told *Newsday* that his company had been impressed by Bernard Kerik's membership on a federal panel that was supposed to give the Department of Homeland Security advice on, among other things, what it ought to be purchasing. Bear Stearns had agreed to invest up to $300 million in new security-related ventures identified by Giuliani Partners, and Perkal said, "Being an adviser in Homeland Security, what has been helpful to us is that he understands the needs of the country. When we look at opportunities, companies that come up for sale, he can say: 'This is a good company. I think it has good growth prospects.'"

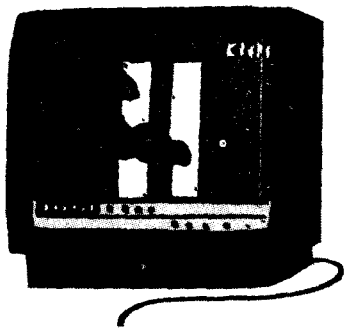
But the American public seems indifferent to such conflicts of interest. A June Quinnipiac University poll showed that Giuliani had the highest rating among nineteen national leaders and potential 2008 presidential candidates, ahead of John McCain, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. ■

AN ENDURING LEGACY OF THE ATTACKS IS THE MEDIA'S LAP-DOG HYPING OF NEW THREATS.

Politics, the Media and 9/11

ERIC BOEHLERT

It was Sunday, August 1, 2004, and Senator John Kerry's presidential prospects appeared healthy. Just days earlier Kerry had accepted his party's nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Boston, and now Kerry was making the rounds on the morning talk shows, aggressively issuing his call for change.



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

At noon Kerry, sitting dead-even in the polls with the incumbent, wartime President, began his fourth and final Sunday morning television interview, appearing on *CNN Late Edition* with Wolf Blitzer. The show opened with a report from Iraq about that day's multiple bomb attacks against Christian churches: "Absolute mayhem on the streets of Baghdad," announced the CNN reporter. The dispatch reinforced Kerry's campaign pitch that President George W. Bush had misled America into a disastrous war.

By 12:30 PM, however, everything *had* changed, including Kerry's chances for victory in November. "It was like we were charging down court to score and suddenly a foul was called," recalls Kerry's spokesman, David Wade.

Because less than ten minutes after thanking Kerry for appearing on his show, Blitzer pivoted and announced, "We're getting some breaking news information. CNN has now learned that the Secretary of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge, is about to announce that the nation will go to a higher level of security..."

Two points that afternoon became glaringly obvious: The "war on terror," Bush's strong suit politically, had returned to the forefront, thanks to the warnings the President himself had signed into action; and the media, particularly cable television outlets, were going to hype the "chilling" terror scare with endless, excited saturation coverage, and do it at Kerry's expense.

The sudden turn of events set in motion the disastrous media month of August for Kerry, during which Iraq was pushed aside in favor of terror and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth overtook all other political stories. (The impact of the first Swift Boat ad began to be felt just days after the August 1 terror scare.) In both instances, the Bush re-election team used the free news media—literally—to alter the course of the campaign. And in both cases the press was only too willing to steer the news in Bush's favor.

Now, two years later, a key question is whether history is about to repeat itself when it comes to the "war on terror." Surveying the political landscape, veteran prognosticator Charlie Cook recently noted, "Unless something very dramatic happens" in the coming weeks, Democrats will reclaim control of the House of Representatives this November as part of an electoral "rout." It's that caveat about something "dramatic" that has Democrats worrying—not because they necessarily fear a terrorist attack on American soil but because they fear another signature terror scare from the Bush Administration.

They also need to worry about the role the media will play if that occurs. Because if one of the enduring legacies of 9/11 has been this Administration's politicization of terror threats inside the United States, the media's lapdog hyping of the threats—its tendency to act as a megaphone instead of a filter, even in the wake of the Administration's clear record of distortion—is another. Too often anxious for access and too nervous about allegations of liberal bias (and, to be fair, somewhat constrained by the fact that the Administration often controls key information and decides how to disseminate it), news organizations remain much more willing to cheerlead terror warnings than seriously question them or put them in proper political context.

For instance, in the wake of Connecticut antiwar candidate Ned Lamont's August primary win over Senator Joe Lieberman, Republican leaders immediately began attacking Democrats and Lamont as being soft not on Iraq but on the "war on terror," with Vice President Dick Cheney even suggesting that "Al Qaeda types" would take comfort in Lamont's win. The following day British and American officials announced sweeping international arrests in connection with an alleged trans-Atlantic terrorist

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plot. The fact that key Bush Administration officials such as Cheney knew about the unfolding terror investigation as they launched their attacks on Lamont, or that the Administration urged the British to quicken the pace of the arrests, drew comparatively little attention.

To be sure, in the wake of terror warnings there have often been follow-up news reports that detailed just how overblown the terror scares were, and journalists responsible for those clear-eyed reports deserve credit for solid work. But those accurate updates were inevitably buried beneath the initial avalanche of fear-driven coverage. Just ask John Kerry.

Perhaps the CNN headline from August 2, 2004, summed up best just how effective such coverage can be at helping the Administration regain political advantage. It read: JOHN KERRY GETS LITTLE BOUNCE FROM DNC; TERROR LEVEL RAISED IN NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, WASHINGTON, DC.

The August 2004 terror scare that helped doom Kerry did not occur in a vacuum. For years following the 9/11 attacks, the Administration crowed about doomsday terror plots that had been foiled, although time and again the facts failed to back up the page-one rhetoric. Recall that when announcing the arrest of alleged dirty bomber José Padilla in June 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft proclaimed (via satellite from Russia, no less), "We have disrupted an unfolding terrorist plot," when in fact Padilla had already been detained for a month and was ultimately charged only with conspiracy to murder with no mention of the alleged dirty bomb plot.

The fact that the August 1, 2004, terror scare that helped doom Kerry was based on four-year-old intelligence came out days afterward.

Note also that the first noticeable wave of Administration warnings came in early 2002 in the weeks surrounding Bush's hawkish "axis of evil" State of the Union address, in which the first seeds for an invasion of Iraq were publicly planted. In his speech Bush warned about "thousands of dangerous killers" who had spread throughout the world "like ticking time bombs set to go off without warning."

The same week, FBI Director Robert Mueller warned that undetected Al Qaeda sleeper cells were likely operating on American soil, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned Americans to prepare for other attacks that "could grow vastly more deadly than those we suffered" on September 11. The bad news came so fast and furious it was hard to get a handle on what was more upsetting: that the Bush Administration, which had previously maintained absolute secrecy about its domestic antiterror operations, was suddenly so talkative, or that the media reported the thinly documented terror threats so breathlessly and uncritically.

Fast-forward to the winter of 2003. With the war in Iraq only weeks away, the mainstream media took their "Fear Factor" programming to new extremes (remember the duct tape scare?), never pausing to ask whether the red-hot terror rhetoric streaming out of the Administration—nationwide terror threats were boosted on February 7 and March 17—were intended to accomplish anything besides whip up hysteria about Islamic terrorists and place the country on a firm war footing.

By the time of Kerry's nomination in 2004, perhaps the White House reasoned that since media-aided terror warnings had been so effective in setting the scene for the war in Iraq, there was no reason they couldn't be used to help to re-elect Bush.

At 2 PM on August 1, 2004, Ridge held an unprecedented Sunday afternoon press conference, broadcast live on network television, to announce the terror scare. Ridge ended his prepared remarks with an unusually partisan flourish: "We must understand that the kind of information available to us today is the result of the President's leadership in the war against terror."

The scare dovetailed perfectly with the Bush/Cheney political strategy. Indeed, the entire re-election campaign was a terrorist-themed event, with officials—including Ridge—stressing to reporters they were convinced Al Qaeda was planning a pre–election day strike inside America. To formalize the theory, the Bush-appointed head of the US Election Assistance Commission wrote to Ridge asking about the possibility of postponing the 2004 presidential election in the event it was interrupted by a terrorist attack.

Rather than describing the uncovering of a specific Al Qaeda terror plot, the way British intelligence officials claimed to have done this summer, what Ridge was touting on August 1 was newly uncovered and detailed surveillance intelligence showing that Al Qaeda members had been casing the World Bank headquarters in Washington, the Citicorp building in New York City and the Prudential financial headquarters in Newark, New Jersey. What Ridge failed to mention, and what government officials seemed to purposely obfuscate, was that the surveillance intelligence predated 9/11—which raised serious doubts about how imminent (or "near term") the threat uncovered actually was. (A spokesman for the World Bank later dismissed the uncovered information as being "largely out of date.")

Later when pressed about the gaping hole in his presentation, Ridge stamped his feet, insisting, "We don't do politics in the Department of Homeland Security." It should be noted though, that during the 2004 campaign season Ridge met privately with two key Republican pollsters, Frank Luntz and Bill McInturff, and took sixteen trips to visit ten presidential battleground states between late May and late October.

After he left Homeland Security in 2005, Ridge himself became more candid in discussing how terror threats had been handled: "More often than not, we were the least inclined to raise it. Sometimes we disagreed with the intelligence assessment. Sometimes we thought even if the intelligence was good, you don't necessarily put the country on alert.... There were times when some people were really aggressive about raising it, and we said, For that?"

Yet during the crucial early stages of reporting on the August 1 terror scare, the press dutifully—even eagerly—followed Ridge's lead, as the following examples demonstrate [emphasis added in each]:

§ "*New intelligence* indicates al Qaeda has been planning to strike financial firms and major corporations in Manhattan,

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possibly with suicide attacks." Don Dahler, *ABC News*.

§ "This *new information* that the US government has received presumably in the last few days," Wolf Blitzer, CNN.

§ "He [Bush] was being told that there was *very new information* regarding these potential threats," Suzanne Malveaux, CNN.

Or consider *Time*'s "exclusive" cover story (Headline: TARGET: AMERICA). Despite the fact that the article came out seven days after the warning was posted, *Time* made little effort to uncover a nonofficial version of the story. Here is a list of the sources *Time* used:

§ "a senior US intelligence official"
§ "a US law-enforcement official"
§ "a law-enforcement official"
§ "a senior intelligence official"
§ "a US military official"
§ "a top Homeland Security official"
§ "an American official"
§ "a Pakistani law-enforcement official"
§ "Pakistani investigators"
§ "a Pakistani intelligence official"
§ "a Pakistani official"
§ "an official"
§ "a senior law-enforcement official"
§ "an FBI official."

Not surprisingly, few of the sources raised serious questions or doubts about Ridge's handling of the terror scare. As for the revelation that the startling intelligence was actually four years old—a fact that came out days after the warning, thanks to reports in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, *Time* dutifully quoted "an FBI official" who dismissed the time stamp as "immaterial."

Time's competitor *Newsweek*, busy touting its own terror scare "exclusive" cover story (same headline: TARGET: AMERICA), dispensed with anonymous sources altogether and simply stated as fact that "there can be little doubt that Al Qaeda is trying to strike the American homeland before Nov. 2." And better yet for the Bush Administration came *Newsweek*'s flat assertion, "The decision to raise the threat level to Code Orange ("high") last week was not, as partisans and conspiracists suggested, a Republican political stunt intended to slow John Kerry as he came out of the Democratic convention."

Despite the obvious boon the terror scare represented for Bush as it knocked Kerry off stride, reporters often played naïve in the extreme, suggesting the Administration was showing *political courage* by posting a terror warning. "This is an Administration, is a president, that is willing to take that political risk," CNN's White House correspondent Suzanne Malveaux announced gravely in the wake of the Ridge press conference. *Time* typed up the same talking points: "The government feels *it has little choice* but to brace the public for another big attack. Bomb-sniffing dogs and explosives-detection teams reappeared in subways and outside public landmarks. In Washington, police set up barricades and checkpoints around the Capitol that could remain in place through Inauguration Day in January." [Emphasis added.] Bush's entire re-election campaign was built around the sales pitch of protecting Americans from another terrorist attack, yet *Time* pretended there was nothing the tough-luck Administration could do but send out bomb-sniffing dogs and set up police barricades around tourist destinations in the months leading up to election day.

Now, as the mid-term elections loom larger and polls indicate Republicans are continuing their popularity plunge, if and when new terror announcements are made it's imperative that journalists acknowledge the political landscape and recognize that their job is not simply to repeat terror-scare chatter. In other words, journalists must be unafraid of the facts and the consequences of reporting them. ■

EXCHANGE
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

many people care about the direction of the environmental movement.

First, a general mea culpa: Some readers complained that I did not spend enough time discussing this or that subset of the movement, e.g., corporate campaigners, evangelicals, the networks on environmental health and holistic solutions. I plead guilty; one would need a book to profile the environmental movement fully, which is (mainly) a sign of its strength.

To specifics: Virginia Giordano is misreading my article if she thinks it downplays environmental justice, and to buttress her mistaken belief she misquotes Jerome Ringo, the African-American chair of the National Wildlife Federation. Ringo says that poor, nonwhite people traditionally have cared little about ozone depletion (which my own reporting has also found), but he does not say they don't care about toxic pollution, nor do I imply that. As for the Environmental Justice for All marches this fall, had I heard about them, I would have mentioned them. In any case, good luck.

The professionalization of the movement criticized by Charlotte Talberth is a real concern—one I discussed in the article. But I reemphasize here that much of the important activism is done by grassroots volunteers, for whom such work is a passion, not a profession.

Finally, Lorna Salzman's condemnation of economic growth touches on one of the most profound but vexing challenges facing environmentalists. She is correct that traditional economic growth has been environmentally destructive, and it is also true that much of what conventional voices now describe as green economics is in fact not very green. But until capitalism is replaced or fundamentally reformed, economic growth is the means by which poor and working-class people around the world make a living. To me, this suggests that for now the imperative is to insist on genuinely green forms of economic growth, by which I mean economic activity that either reduces current and future environmental damage (via investments in energy efficiency, noncarbon energy sources, mass transit systems, green buildings, etc.) or that remediates existing damage (e.g., reforestation or ocean cleanup). Active, vigilant government regulation is essential in either case. And techno-fixes, though useful, are not silver bullets; we must also stop runaway consumerism.

But we must begin these tasks from where we are, not where we wish we were. It may be true that the Apollo Project's reforms represent a 45-degree shift when we need a 180-degree reversal, but Apollo is only a first step. We'll have better luck if we start with a 45-degree shift and show people it can work on both economic and environmental fronts before urging them to go further. The lecturing tone Salzman prefers—warning Americans of inevitable dislocation and hardship if they don't get rid of capitalism—is, I believe, part of why so many people have tuned environmentalists out, at a time when enviros need to be heard more than ever.

MARK HERTSGAARD

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Ottoman Ghosts

DANIEL LAZARE

OSMAN'S DREAM: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923.
By Caroline Finkel. Basic. 660 pp. $35.

If, in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, you had asked any practitioner of realpolitik which great power represented the wave of the future, the answer would have been easy: the Ottomans. They were everything the Europeans were not. Instead of an endless tangle of feudalities and sub-feudalities, their empire was a unified war machine run by an all-powerful sultan, with a grand vizier in charge of day-to-day operations much like a modern prime minister. Instead of headstrong barons and earls perennially at war with one another, the Ottoman army was a centralized, disciplined body equipped with the latest cannons and musketry. Instead of a complicated array of tolls, manorial dues and forced-labor obligations, the Ottoman tax system was simple, efficient and considerably less oppressive from the viewpoint of the peasantry. Even in the area of religion, the Ottomans seemed to have forged ahead. Where European Christendom was burdened by an overweening church and interminable debates over whether Jesus was divine, human or both, the Ottomans offered a stripped-down monotheism that was tolerant and egalitarian. Jews and Christians who wished to partake of Ottoman-style Islam with its strong Sufi influences could do so. Those who did not were required to pay a modest poll tax but were otherwise left alone.

But this merely goes to show how shallow such "realism" can be. Despite its fragmented political structure—or, paradoxically, because of it—Western Europe was an increasingly dynamic society on just about every level, from philosophy to industrial production. Science was taking flight, Western shipping was ranging farther out onto the high seas and visitors in fifteenth-century Italy, to cite a more modest example, marveled at the widespread use of water mills to power everything from saws to blast furnaces. The Ottomans, by contrast, were increasingly frozen. Technology was at a standstill, and the empire's financial woes had been mounting. Faced with the growing cost of rebuilding the newly conquered city of Constantinople, Sultan Mehmed II debased the coinage on no fewer than six occasions beginning in the 1440s. Taxes were rising as well, while the empire's once formidable military advantage was starting to erode. The Ottomans were powerless to stop Portuguese ships from invading the Indian Ocean, virtually their own backyard, and thanks to a Habsburg-Venetian naval victory at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, they were also losing their grip on the eastern Mediterranean.

[illegible]

But the downhill slide did not really set in until a grand vizier named Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha disregarded orders and launched an ill-conceived siege of Vienna in 1683. If ever there was a case of imperial overreach, this was it. The siege went well enough at first when the Turks breached the city's outer defenses. But then troops began pouring in from Bavaria, Saxony and Poland-Lithuania. Crossing the Danube, they joined forces with the Austrians and proceeded to cut the Ottomans to ribbons. Three years later, the Habsburgs took Buda, which the Ottomans had held for more than a century and a half, and a year after that the Venetians invaded Peloponnesus in Turkish-occupied Greece. The Austrians took Belgrade in 1688, which Turkish occupying forces preferred to loot rather than defend, and, under Prince Eugene of Savoy, one of the great military figures of the age, they handed the Otto-

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mans another smashing defeat, near the Serbian town of Senta in 1697. The upshot was the humiliating Treaty of Karlowitz, which not only stripped the Ottomans of many of their European possessions but confirmed their status as a second-rate player in military affairs.

An up-and-coming power suddenly found itself on the way out. This is the story that Caroline Finkel, a historian who divides her time between London and Istanbul, tells in *Osman's Dream*, her massive new account of the empire's dramatic rise and protracted fall. With holdings stretching from the Balkans to the Persian Gulf, the Ottomans not only straddled Europe and Asia but the modern and the premodern world as well. Originating in the age of the Crusades and the Mongol invasions, the empire was a classic example of a political formation that hung on too long. By the nineteenth century, when Czar Nicholas I famously described it as "the Sick Man of Europe," it was "the most obvious evolutionary fossil" in existence, according to Eric Hobsbawm, from the point of view of Western liberalism. Yet it lingered on nonetheless. Much of the fault lay with the European powers: Concerned that one of them might unduly benefit from the empire's demise, they cooperated in keeping this Eurasian dinosaur on life support far beyond its allotted time. A decrepit ruling class was allowed to teeter from catastrophe to catastrophe until a nationalist assembly in Ankara finally pulled the plug in 1924. The lesson, to the extent there was one in this debacle, is that complacency is never warranted in politics because assets can turn into liabilities in the blink of an eye. This is not to say the Ottomans did not have their moments of creativity—they would never have gotten as far as they did without it. But they held on to their old ways too long while their rivals grew more innovative.

The Ottoman Empire was kept on life support by the European powers, which feared that one of them might unduly benefit from its demise.

Although their origins are obscure, the Ottomans appear to have begun as a Turkic tribe that, by the late thirteenth century, had gained a foothold in northwest Anatolia, cheek by jowl with the shrunken remnants of the once-mighty Byzantine Empire. The location proved fortuitous. It enabled them to take advantage of the empire's accelerating decline and also to learn from its example. Where other Turkic peoples had stayed with the loose tribal arrangements they had inherited from Central Asia, the Ottomans, perhaps in emulation of the Byzantines, opted for a more centralized structure that proved more durable. Intervening in the empire's growing civil wars, they crossed the Dardanelles, took over much of the Balkans before the Byzantines quite knew what was happening and thus encircled the exhausted city-state of Constantinople.

In 1389 the Ottomans crushed the Serbian army led by Prince Lazar at Kosovo Polje, the "Field of Blackbirds" that still looms large in Serbian national mythology. They suffered a near-fatal setback at the hands of the ferocious Tamerlane in 1402 but were able to recover over the next decade after a period of protracted infighting. The succession struggle led the ruling family to adopt an official policy of royal fratricide, which eventually became something of an Ottoman trademark. Upon ascending the throne, each new sultan was required to execute his brothers and half-brothers en masse to prevent any of them from making a rival claim. The policy may well have been an improvement over the old Mongolian practice of allowing the numerous harem offspring to fight it out to determine which one enjoyed God's favor, but not by much. In the eyes of the world, it confirmed the Ottomans' reputation for cruelty, a reputation the dynasty did everything to reinforce with its penchant for executing viziers whenever they incurred the sultan's displeasure. As Finkel puts it:

> The pages of Ottoman history are filled with accounts of expropriations and executions of high-ranking officials...summarily punished at the whim of the sultan and often at the instigation of rivals for power; victims were frequently led to believe they had attracted the lesser punishment of exile only to find the executioner in hot pursuit.

The Ottomans continued to advance, however, thanks in no small part to the deep disarray on the European side. The Papacy was divided into warring factions for much of the fourteenth century, and the longstanding rancor between Greek and Latin Christianity prevented the West from mounting more than a token defense of the beleaguered Byzantines. Indeed, after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, it appeared that Mehmed II might be gearing up for a similar assault on the other great Christian capital, Rome. As Finkel recounts: "Among the titles Sultan Mehmed claimed for himself was that of 'Roman Caesar', signifying his aspiration to succeed to the mantle of the Byzantine Empire at the height of its greatness under Constantine and Justinian.... After Constantinople, the capture of Rome represented the ultimate prize." In 1480 Europe watched with growing alarm as an Ottoman force seized a fortress in the town of Otranto on the Italian heel. But the final assault never came, and the empire turned its attention in other directions—toward Syria, Egypt and North Africa, toward Iran and toward the Muslim Tartars on the other side of the Black Sea.

The Ottoman political structure evolved in tandem with its conquests. Sultan Orhan I, who succeeded his father, Osman I, around 1323, was a frontier warrior who, according to Finkel, "moved constantly between the hundred or so fortresses he commanded, in order to make sure they were in good repair." But as the empire expanded and wealth poured in, his successors responded by retreating ever more deeply into the recesses of their harems in Topkapi Palace, seldom showing themselves to the public or even to their closest advisers. Rather than participating in meetings of his imperial council, Suleiman the Magnificent, whose reign from 1520 to 1566 marked the apogee of Ottoman power, preferred to observe them through a latticed window set high up in a nearby wall. On the rare occasions when he did appear before the public—when attending Friday prayers, for instance, or making a show of leading his army off to war—the event was carefully stage-managed to enhance the royal mystique.

Paralyzing as this sort of royal reclusiveness could be, it had the curious effect of binding the center more closely to the periphery. Figuring that outlying elements would have few local ties to divide their loyalties, the Ottomans created a professional army, the famous janissaries—from *yeniceri*, or "new force"—composed of conscripted Christian youths forcibly converted to Islam, who answered to the sultan alone. Of Mehmed II's seven grand viziers, according to *Osman's Dream*, two were Christian-born converts raised via the janissary youth-levy, two were Christian-born scions of the Byzantine or Byzanto-Serbian nobility, and a fifth was also Christian-born but of unknown ethnic origin. High-ranking Ottomans even relied on outsiders for their wives and concubines, whom they acquired either as war booty or as slaves.

As profitable (or pleasurable) as such policies might be, their negative consequences grew more and more apparent as the years wore on. The janissaries turned increasingly into a racket—ill disciplined,

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poorly trained, their ranks padded with no-shows. As their effectiveness on the military field plummeted, their rebelliousness in the capital grew. As the harems expanded—by the 1680s, the sultan needed eighty coaches to transport his wives and concubines and their various attendants—so did the number of royal progeny, and palace politics grew increasingly deadly and complex. Princes raised in this fetid atmosphere were supremely unsuited for the hard-nosed business of running an empire. Slavery was especially crippling: At a time when the practice had long vanished from Western Europe, Tartar raiders ranged far and wide in order to satisfy a seemingly inexhaustible demand in Constantinople, reportedly seizing 18,000 in 1468 in Poland alone. Since slave labor is notoriously unproductive, one consequence was long-term technological stagnation, which is one reason why the empire, according to neocon historian Bernard Lewis, had proportionally fewer water- and windmills in the sixteenth century than England did in the eleventh. Constant slave raids caused Slavic resistance to stiffen so that the Turks eventually faced a serious rival to the north in the shape of the Russian czars.

With the path blocked to the west, moreover, expansion eastward and southward into Syria, Iraq and North Africa led to a prolonged fiscal crisis, as the Christian population declined relative to the empire as a whole and the poll tax on non-Muslim *dhimmis* failed to provide an adequate source of revenue. Anxious to preserve their privileges, those on top responded as those on top always do, i.e., by shifting the burden onto those below. At one point, peasants in outlying portions of Anatolia were reportedly so hungry they were reduced to eating grass—and that was in the early seventeenth century, when the empire was still in its prime. Much worse was to come.

Yet the Ottomans could not simply abandon policies that had provided the basis for their expansion. This is why the response among Ottoman intellectuals to the empire's lengthening list of troubles was initially a conservative one: If things were going poorly, then the answer was to turn the clock back to the days when the empire was young and vigorous and things were going well. Only in the nineteenth century did it begin to dawn on high-level government functionaries that the answer was to move forward. The result beginning in the 1830s was a period of force-marched progress and reform. Legal codes were imported from the West, the *dhimmi* tax was abolished (although it persisted in other forms) and trade was liberalized. But reformers faced a dilemma: The more they relied on the sultanate to institute such reforms, the more they wound up feeding its tyrannical tendencies. Yet there was no other force capable of holding together, say, an Eastern Orthodox peasant in Serbia and a Jewish merchant in Constantinople, or a Muslim fellah in the Hijaz. While some Ottomans looked to Islam as a binding agent, stepped-up religious orthodoxy would alienate Christians in Armenia and the Balkans all the more. Indeed, thanks to the notorious "capitulations" system—which granted special privileges to foreign merchants and encouraged Christians and, to a lesser extent, Jews to throw in their lot with major trading powers like Britain and France—Muslims were already the most economically backward segment of the Ottoman population. Islamicization would only add to the economic malaise.

By forestalling change for centuries on end, the Ottomans merely insured that it would be all the more violent when it finally arrived.

Eventually, World War I provided a solution of sorts. The Ottomans had grown close to Germany since the 1870s, mainly because it was the only Great Power without a direct interest in the Middle East. But in 1914 they allowed their ties with Berlin to draw them into a conflict for which they were completely unprepared. Communications had improved, writes Finkel, but transportation infrastructure was still so rudimentary that it took more than a month to travel from Istanbul to Syria and nearly two months to reach Mesopotamia. The whole ramshackle enterprise was almost begging to be attacked. Soon, hostile armies were invading the Dardanelles, the Caucasus region, eastern Anatolia and the Arab areas, with ghastly military consequences. Casualties zoomed and, by the end of the conflict, the empire had been reduced to little more than its Anatolian core.

Still, radical surgery of this sort was not without certain benefits. By shearing away virtually all of the Ottomans' Arab and Christian possessions, the war paved the way for the rise of ethnic Turkish nationalism, a force that was not only different from Ottoman imperialism but in many ways its opposite. Ottoman writers had used words like "Turk," "Kurd" and "Arab" as terms of disparagement, often with the adjectives "ignorant" or "dishonest" attached. But beginning in the late nineteenth century, no doubt in response to the growth of pan-Slavism and similar ideologies in Europe and Russia, a different view of Turkishness began to emerge. Rather than a term of opprobrium, it came to be seen as a badge of pride. Still, the break with past practice was less than complete. In contrast to the Ottomans, post–World War I nationalists defined Turkishness ethnically, but religious criteria lingered. Thus, Greek Anatolians were a legitimate ethnic minority but Sunni Kurds were not. Since they were Muslim, they had to be Turks. In solving one ethnic problem, the nationalists opened the door to another.

The culmination of this process was the Turkish republic, a secular state with a tradition of military authoritarianism, lingering disputes over mosque-state relations and more than its share of ethnic conflict. The new regime, led by a former military officer named Mustafa Kemal—subsequently dubbed Atatürk, which translates roughly as "father of his people"—moved aggressively to sever its ties with the Muslim imperial past. The sultan was sent packing, the caliphate was abolished, the fez was outlawed, and Sufi lodges and the graves of Sufi saints were closed off. The old Muslim lunar calendar was abandoned, as was the Muslim practice of numbering hours from sunset. The legal code was Westernized, the status of women revolutionized, Arabic script abolished and the language reformed so as to purge it of Persian and Arab influences, a process that further distanced Turkey from its imperial past. It was as if Italy had expelled the pope, nationalized the Vatican and banned the clerical collar. By forestalling change for centuries on end, the Ottomans merely insured that it would be all the more violent when it finally arrived.

Caroline Finkel, who provides a minute account of what each grand vizier did at nearly every passing moment, is plainly one of those historians who believe that God is in the details. The results are not for the faint of heart, and many readers, confronted with a long parade of wars, assassinations and palace coups, will no doubt find the multisyllabic Turkish names swimming before their eyes. She has little sense of drama or how to paint a scene, which makes for a certain narrative flatness. She also pays little attention to underlying social or economic forces. We learn little about urban life, peasant conditions, the technological standstill that contributed to the empire's decline or, for that matter, the special circumstances that enabled it to grow in the first place. For matters such as these, readers will find Stanford Shaw's two-volume *History of the Ottoman Empire*

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and Modern Turkey, published by Cambridge three decades ago, to be both more readable and more informative.

Still, Finkel is judicious, evenhanded and objective, qualities not exactly in abundance among historians of the Balkans and Middle East, and *Osman's Dream* is an impressive and important work. It is also very timely. Readers who delve into it will likely do so with one overriding question in mind: Is it any coincidence that the old Ottoman territory now spans some of the most troubled places on earth? To what degree can the Ottomans be held responsible for the arc of violence extending in recent years from the Danube to the Euphrates?

The answer: To a great degree they can. The empire left behind a trail of impoverishment and underdevelopment at least as bad as that of the Spanish and Russian empires, and maybe even worse. The famous millet system, in which Jews, Armenians, Greeks and other ethno-religious minorities were granted a high degree of autonomy, is an example of how even the more positive aspects of Ottoman rule eventually turned into their opposite. Based ultimately on Islamic law, which grants protection to "People of the Book" as long as they do not challenge Muslim rule as a whole, it served as a model of tolerant pluralism at a time when Europeans were torching synagogues and threatening the few Muslim communities left in their midst with conversion, expulsion or death. Given a record like this, it is hard not to admire the Ottoman sultan who, welcoming Jews that Ferdinand had just kicked out of Spain, reportedly observed: "Can you call such a king wise and intelligent? He is impoverishing his country and enriching my kingdom." But, attractive as such attitudes might be, pluralism was an instrument of control that the sultans used to hold their empire together by, among other things, insuring that political power in each community remained in the hands of the most docile and conservative elements. Once the empire embarked on its long swan dive, communal lines hardened and tensions rose. Jews fared the best, since their lack of ties to any outside power (with the partial exception of Britain) made them seem less politically troublesome. But the Armenians, viewed as virtually a Russian fifth column, suffered enormously when the Ottomans went to war against the czar in 1914. Greeks, Maronites, Druse and Shiites also suffered either because their foreign ties made them suspect or (in the case of the Shiites) they were viewed as heretical. The upshot was the worst of all possible worlds, a patchwork quilt of separate-and-unequal communities united by a common attachment to frozen religious practices and a common disdain for the equally frozen religious community across the way. By the end, the empire was little more than a giant machine for the manufacture of ethno-religious enmity, as the world has since learned to its dismay.

Nowhere are the after-shocks of the Ottoman breakup more evident than in Lebanon and Israel. After being detached from Greater Syria by the French and British, Lebanon took the old Ottoman system to baroque extremes, divvying up political power among some eighteen religious communities. Israel is a millet that has armed itself with all the weaponry of a modern nation-state. One is a collection of confessions jockeying for power, while the other is a modern Sparta that confuses ethnic solidarity with political democracy. A lot of people have contributed to the current debacle—British, French and American imperialists; Zionists; and Islamic jihadists, to name just a few. But as *Osman's Dream* makes clear, the Ottomans laid the foundation over the course of some six centuries. It is not an achievement to be proud of. ■

Londonistan Calling

GARY YOUNGE

LONDONSTANI. By Gautam Malkani. Penguin Press. 342 pp. $24.95.

In the days immediately following the July 2005 terrorist attacks in London, the American press described the city as a hub of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorist cells. With headlines like "For a Decade London Thrived as a Busy Crossroads of Terror" (*New York Times*) and "Continent's Issues Include Geography and Open Borders—Bombers Travel Freely, Police Cannot" (*Wall Street Journal*), the city was characterized as a "breeding ground for hate" and a "crossroads for would-be terrorists" where Muslims exploit civil liberties and "openly preached violence." Like Kandahar, only with bowler hats.

This was a shock to most Londoners, including myself. True, London does have its fair share of radical Islamist clerics. There is Abu Hamza at the Finsbury Park Mosque, recently convicted of incitement to murder and racial hatred for his anti-Semitic rants; and there was the Brixton Mosque, spiritual nurturing ground of would-be shoe bomber Richard Reid. But nothing on the apocalyptic scale described by American journalists. Indeed, before the week was out it would transpire that none of the bombers actually came from London.

Nonetheless, so entrenched was the notion that the British capital had become a mutinous outpost of the Islamist diaspora that American reporters were determined to rename the capital Londonistan. The word, which I had never heard used in England before, was employed at least nine times in different American papers in the six days following the attacks.

In a bid to give it legitimacy each writer would strain to explain its provenance. And with each contradictory explanation it became increasingly clear that the source lay in the ethnic and religious template they themselves had designed for the city. In the *New York Times* Peter Bergen claimed: "Arab militants living in London sometimes jokingly refer to their hometown as Londonistan." The *San Jose Mercury News* argued that "for years, those in diplomatic and security circles have referred to England's capital as Londonistan." According to the *Pittsburgh Tribune Review* the French were responsible: "Frustration over extradition delays has led some to dub their neighbor Londonistan."

Quite who these "some" referred to was conveniently unreported, but such claims have since found their echo in *Londonistan*, a shrill broadside against multiculturalism by right-wing British columnist Melanie Phillips. Phillips claims Britain "is currently locked into such a spiral of decadence, self-loathing and sentimentality that it is incapable of seeing that it is setting itself up for cultural immolation." Such views were given succor—but little substance—in August when British security services uncovered an alleged plot to blow up planes bound for America. This time a large number of those believed to be involved did come from London's East End borough of Walthamstow. Whatever else ushered the

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most recent terror suspects into the trade, it was clearly not a desire to self-segregate. These were young men who played soccer, delivered pizzas and supported Liverpool. At least two were white converts. One waits for the first appearance of "Walthamstan" in the American media lexicon.

With the release of Gautam Malkani's novel *Londonstani*, the term is now ready for public consumption in a manner far less contrived and far more in keeping with the context of Britain's particular racial and ethnic reality—a postcolonial hub to which the four corners of the globe descended after World War II and the collapse of the British Empire. Immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India have made more than a quarter of the city nonwhite.

Londonstani tells the story of Jas, a teenager living in Hounslow, near Heathrow Airport, who has fallen in with a crowd of South Asian toughs, all of whom are retaking their university entrance exams after failing the first time around. There is Hardjit, the hard man with a Sikh Khanda symbol tattooed on his bulging right bicep; Ravi, a self-styled ladies' man with a BMW decked out to match the color of the underwear belonging to the women he seduces inside; and Amit, overwhelmed by the family rows over his brother's impending wedding.

From the outset it's clear that Jas is an outsider, tormented by the gang that keeps itself in bling with the help of a small-scale mobile phone racket. The only thing Jas wants more than to belong is to have a date with a much-desired Muslim girl, Samira. But his Sikh and Hindu friends warn him against looking for lust across the religious divide. Yet for all their machismo this is a tame, if not lame, bunch. Ravi's lady magnet of a BMW actually belongs to his mum, and the gang's mothers interrupt their underworld cellphone business to bring up samosas and drinks.

While Jas persists in his romantic endeavors, his gang hits pay dirt when they're introduced to Sanjay, a former stockbroker who offers to buy as many mobile phones as they can pilfer. With Sanjay's help, Jas successfully woos Samira before he finds himself out of his depth and in serious trouble over his involvement in the caper. The book ends with a twist, as corny as it is clever, which it would be churlish to divulge here.

Such a rich tale of London life is vulnerable to miscategorization. Written by a young, smart, Cambridge-educated nonwhite Briton (Malkani's day job is editing the *Financial Times*'s Creative Business

The Ending of War

When the time comes to count the cost, men* will be amazed at, and ashamed of, the waste of war. More than any other activity of men, war eats greedily into resources and lives. Nothing is spared in the effort to overcome the enemy ; everything is sacrificed to the attainment of victory. Thus has man waged relentless strife against his neighbour, and not always in self-defence. As often as not, war has been used for the expansion of territory, the accumulation of plunder or, most abhorrently, the capture of slaves.

"...there is no problem or situation which needs war to solve or cure."

The spoils of war is a phrase used lightly to describe the underlying purpose of most wars.

Today, we have reached a time when men must take seriously the task of ending war. Men must understand that there is no problem or situation which needs war to solve or cure. This being so the nations must together act and end for ever that destructive aptitude of men.

Should they fail to do so, they threaten the very existence of the race. Peace is no longer an option for men: they have now in their hands the deadliest weapon of all time which, if used in major war, would desecrate the planet and leave it lifeless for aeons of time. Why, then, court such disaster, such an end?

Slippery Slope

Maitreya, you may be sure, will speak thus on His emergence. He will show men that small wars can lead to terrible consequences, and set men on the slippery slope of self-destruction. He will counsel gravely and turn men from the unthinkable. Be vigilant but not afraid; trust Maitreya to wisely guide the actions of men. Play your part in the task of educating your brothers and sisters and so make lighter His burden.

Tell all who will listen that the Expected One is here, ready to begin, openly, His Mission. That He relies on the men and women of goodwill to work with Him for peace and justice, freedom and love. Tell them this. Tell them that Maitreya has the simple answer for the world s woes. That sharing will engender the trust that will open the door, and the hearts of men, to blessed peace.

Then will you see the flowering of the human spirit in brotherhood and cooperation. Then will the problems and blockages melt away, overcome in overflowing goodwill.

Thus will it be, and thus shall we witness the end of the abomination of war. Such is Maitreya s purpose and firm is His will for its accomplishment.

This article, published in *Share International* magazine, was written by a Master of Wisdom. The Masters, headed by Maitreya, the World Teacher, are highly advanced teachers and advisors of humanity who are planning to work openly in the world very soon.

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section), *Londonstani* appears on paper to belong on the same shelf as the work of a new wave of British talent that has traveled from the racial and ethnic margins to the cultural mainstream in a single generation. The success of books by Zadie Smith, Andrea Levy and Monica Ali has created the impression that a version of the Harlem Renaissance has taken root in the British capital, of which *Londonstani* is just the latest expression. In crude demographic terms that conclusion makes sense. In literary terms it would just be plain crude.

Londonstani has little in common with Smith's social mimicry or Ali's slow-paced nineteenth-century realist narratives, and it occupies an altogether darker and less absurd terrain than Hanif Kureishi's *Buddha of Suburbia*. The novel's rough urban argot and moral ambiguity owe far more to Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*. Jas has a moral compass, but his friends are driven by a mix of priapic nihilism, materialism and criminality that he imbibes in order to fit in. Like Welsh's layabouts from Leith, Malkani's characters make up in bravado and, when necessary, violence what they lack in principle.

The book opens with Hardjit giving a white boy a beating for calling him a "Paki" (which the boy denies):

> "Why didn't you tell them I didn't say anything?" asks the boy.
>
> "OK, Daniel, swear on your mothers's life you din't call us Pakis," says Jas.
>
> "For fuck's sake, Jas, you know my mother's dead...you came to the funeral."
>
> Jas just turns around and jogs back to the car.

Also like Welsh in *Trainspotting*, Malkani writes dialogue in local vernacular—a London-street patois informed by youth, ethnic hybridity, hip-hop and new technology. Much is in cellphone English: "I also told'chyu we had 2 call Davinder b4 we left dis place, innit, so any a u chiefs know his mobile?" asks the gang leader Hardjit at one point. Jas hangs out with "Desis" (the self-description of choice for many Anglo-Asians), who all keep their distance from "khotas" (idiots) and maintain a wry indifference toward "goras" (whites). But they also act like "rudeboys," hang out with their "bredren" and call gay people "battys"—all words of Jamaican derivation. At moments they are saying "innit" as though they are East End cockneys; at others they are calling each other "blud" and "homeboy" as though they are straight out of Compton.

At times this mix is playfully subversive—one character is told to "wake up, smell the masala tea"; Jas tells us Desi fathers will "drop you like a hot samosa." But it can be jarring, too. Like Forest Whitaker fumbling to maintain his English accent for the duration of *The Crying Game*, Malkani puts unlikely middle-class words into the narrative voice of the supposedly streetwise Jas:

> Regarding it as some kind a civic duty to educate others in this basic social etiquette, he continued kickin the white kid in the face, each kick carefully planted so he din't get blood on his Nike Air Force Ones (the pair he'd bought even before Nelly released a track bout what wikid trainers they were).

It's unclear how someone who thinks in terms of "civic duty" and "basic social etiquette" can move so easily to Nelly's "wikid" sneakers; still, Malkani's overall portrait of a hybridity of races, religions, ethnicities and globalized reference points is a welcome reflection of the everyday life of London's youth.

Britain exported its codified racism to the colonies, which was also where the civil rights movements took place against colonial rule. With no history of official segregation or mass struggles for integration on British soil, there are relatively few autonomous spaces for racial and ethnic minorities outside of religion. One in two black men and one in three black women are in relationships with white people. (Bangladeshis, meanwhile, are the group least likely to intermarry.) At the same time, you will hear white and Asian kids speaking an Anglicized Jamaican patois. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. pointed out in *The New Yorker* several years ago, "Black culture simply *is* youth culture in London today." Sacha Baron Cohen's Ali G didn't come from nowhere.

Racism, of course, still exists—in May, for instance, the fascist British National Party won eleven seats in the suburban district of Barking and Dagenham. But for the new urban generation of which Malkani and his white, black and Asian peers are part, a return to an exclusively white national identity is impossible to imagine. Two-thirds of those of Caribbean descent, a third of those of Chinese descent and the majority of children in every minority community in Britain were born there. Indian restaurants not only make the country's most popular dish; they employ more people than shipbuilding, steel and mining put together.

Malkani gives voice to this generation of young people who flirt with the world both Phillips and her ideological American counterparts fear most—not the world of jihadis but of those ambivalent to and at times even scornful of British establishment norms. These are people who are talked about often—usually in the context of crime, immigration, race or fundamentalism—but whom we rarely hear talk. (True, none of *Londonstani*'s main characters are Muslim, but as Sikhs and Hindus, none would be welcomed in Phillips's monocultural utopia, either.) Malkani is interested in youth who are socially disaffected and sexually distracted, culturally integrated and autonomous, indifferent in their religious observance and aggressive in their tribal affiliations—a cause for concern but certainly not panic. His London is not a city of countless terror cells about to be torn apart by extremism but a parallel universe where nonwhites are so tightly interwoven into the fabric that to try and pick them out would make the whole weave unravel. There is neither racial harmony nor animosity but a banal, occasionally volatile coexistence of various traditions that rub up against one another because they have done so and they have to continue to do so.

When the boys' former high school teacher—a poorly painted pastiche of white liberalism—tells them he is tired of hearing the misogynistic language they glean from rap videos, Ravi accuses him of being racist. "I don't mind you using your mother tongue," says the teacher.

> In actual fact I've often thought it admirable the way you boys mix up Hindi with Urdu and Punjabi to create your own second-generation tongue. It's the English code words I can't stand.... The way your use of English makes your lot look like you're some kind of Asian mafia rather than your use of your mother tongue.

When they speak in languages he doesn't understand, it irks him far less than when they say things he doesn't like in a language he does.

As long as nonwhites have been in London, people have been trying to imagine the city without them. In 1601 Elizabeth I declared herself "highly discontented to understand the great numbers of negars and Blackamoores which...are crept into this realm." In 1788 Philip Thicknesse complained that "London abounds with an incredible number of these black men...in almost every village are to be seen a little race of mulattoes, mischievous as monkeys and infinitely more dangerous." And more recently, *Bridget Jones's Diary, Notting Hill* and *Match Point* have filled film screens with a lily-white fantasy not unlike that of *Seinfeld* or *Will & Grace*. The characters

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of *Londonstani* drive one more nail into that colorless coffin.

Of course, the fact that this imaginary white London has overcome all evidence of demography does not in itself lend merit to every nonwhite creative response to it. While Malkani's portrait of teenagers flirting with petty crime is lively, it falls short as a literary exploration of how this South Asian youth subculture relates to the post-9/11 British and global culture. The politics that nourish the plot with dramatic tension and energy, racial violence and pressure, appear but are never examined. The title suggests more than a tale of adolescent reckless abandon with an ethnic flavor, and yet at times that's all the reader gets.

Malkani ignores direct engagement with the political context, which reduces his characters to a series of stiff and purposeless actions; they are all function. This vacuum also makes the pacing of the book somewhat awkward. The first third meanders; in the second the story finds its rhythm; in the third it unravels at an almighty speed, which leaves you thinking that Malkani was merely chasing a punch line.

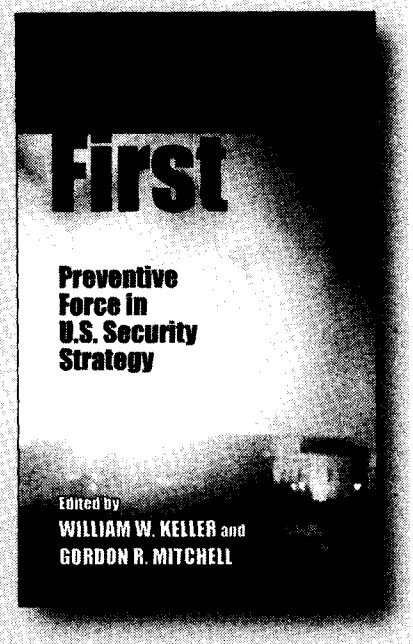
At times Malkani also clearly lacks Welsh's confidence that his audience will grasp the full meaning of his words. Having taken the bold step of putting the dialogue in the vernacular, he occasionally feels the need to overexplain rather than trust that the (mostly white) audience will figure it out. Twice, within three pages, he explains that "coconut" denotes a race traitor who is brown on the outside and white on the inside. This is a common dilemma for a nonwhite British writer, but Malkani's solution only yields a common problem—fluent text labored by footnotes for readers unfamiliar with street slang.

But when Malkani steps back and lets Jas and his crew drive the novel, it comes alive. Like teenagers everywhere, their primary concern is to define themselves before others do the defining for them.

"People're always tryin' to stick a label on our scene," Jas complains.

> That's the problem with havin a fuckin scene. First we was rudeboys, then we be Indian niggas, then rajamuffins, then raggastanis, Britasians, fuckin Indo-brits. These days we try an use our own word for homeboy an so we just call ourselves desis.

To that list of labels imposed by others we can now add, if some are to be believed, "threat to national security" and "enemies of national identity." Whoever lives in the Londonistan of American commentators and their handful of British counterparts, few of them appear to be Londonstanis. ■



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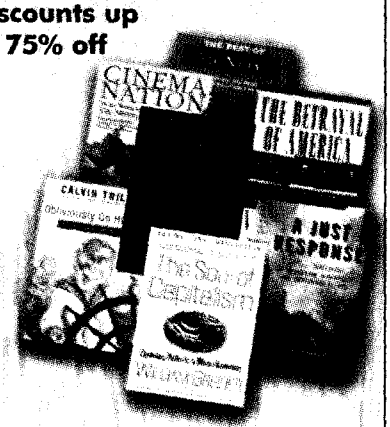

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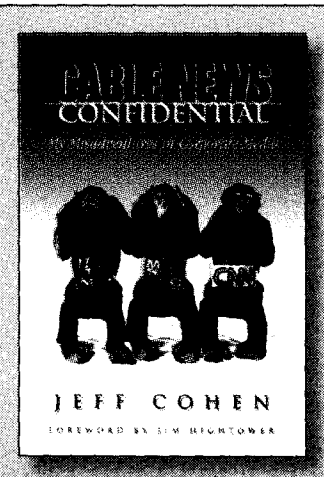

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CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

THINGS I DIDN'T KNOW: A Memoir. By Robert Hughes. Knopf. 395 pp. $27.95.

I may not be the only member of the male sex who wishes that he was built like a brick outhouse and could simultaneously dilate in copper-plate oral and written sentences on subjects such as Francisco Goya and Leonardo da Vinci. To be able to reverse these roles or idioms might also be nice: I once asked Robert Hughes how he was doing and was told that he was busy reworking *The Shock of the New* in order to take account of recent postmodernism: "It's only like trying to shift a ton of shit with a shoehorn."

We have been almost as lucky with our Australian cultural and literary exiles as with our Irish ones, perhaps for the reason that many of them, their forebears originally transported from Ireland to Australia, still wouldn't stay put. Hughes has written very pungently in the past—as in *The Fatal Shore*—about the "convict stain" that marred and marked the country of his birth. The effect of this local complex, if I had to summarize it, was almost wholly paradoxical. A young Australian, growing up in a deeply Tory nation after World War II, would feel the urge to depart not in spite of his affection for the classical tradition but because of it. Conservatism down under, that's to say, represented not high culture but philistinism. Anyone found haunting an art gallery or a library would be suspected, like a crab climbing out of a barrel, of being a snob and an elitist and a deserter, whose own people were not good enough for him. (The same knight's-move torture is captured in another Hughes anecdote that I treasure: His mates at the University of Sydney became so concerned by his fondness for female company that they formed up and huskily asked him straight out if he was a homosexual.)

The resulting Antipodean diaspora has given us Peter Porter, Clive James, Barry Humphries, Germaine Greer, Richard Neville, Bruce Beresford and others, many of whom began to feel partly reconciled to their "old country" (and more radicalized by their connection to it) after the election and subsequent removal of Gough Whitlam's Labour government in the early 1970s. At last, a prime minister who could actually be glimpsed at the Sydney Opera House! At last, a prime minister who did not regard Australia as a mere "ditto" to British or American foreign policy. In exile terms, this cultural metamorphosis was quite well represented by a beefy and hearty critic for *Time* magazine, who could be seen enthusiastically discoursing about painting—and making it accessible to the "masses" while holding his own in the atelier—yet could be glimpsed on weekends at Shelter Island, on one occasion slugging a landed shark to death with a baseball bat (if rumor is not a lying jade) and on another tossing his shotgun into the harbor lest its presence coincide with a fit of the blues. Drinks were served, or so it was convincingly said. Restaurants were certainly reviewed, as well. Women were often kind, as they can be to those, however chaotic, who appreciate them.

Thus Hughes's memoir, *Things I Didn't Know*, rightly begins at the moment when a life of appetite and gusto might have been aborted: with a catastrophic car accident in Western Australia after a hot day of tussling with the sort of fish who can fight back. To say that Hughes was lucky to survive the wreck of the vehicle would be banal. There must have been moments, as he surveyed the mangling of his physical frame, when he wondered if he had been fortunate at all. (His improbable survival is just where the brick shit-house factor came in handy; that, and the timely action taken by an Aborigine named Joe Fishhook, whom we have to thank for these ensuing pages.) It's been said that there's nothing like the exhilaration provided by a near miss, and I have once or twice found this to be true: The lingering result of a near-death experience that nearly crushes you body and soul is obviously not so cheering. So call this a memoir that is soberly written by a dead man on leave.

Australian style in its native form is hyperbolic and enthusiastic and populist. Hughes's self-deprecation and understatement, by contrast, are almost exaggerated. Of the several layered pentimentos contained within the story, one can only hope

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair.

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to select a few, and I choose his Catholicism, his "Sixties" and his unslakable thirst for color and action upon canvas. I do this partly because I used to wonder why Hughes got Andy Warhol—product of the same triptych—so wrong. In his dislike for *Interview* magazine and its affectless admiration for the Shah and Nancy Reagan, Hughes denounced Warhol in intemperate tones that, to his credit, he later came to reconsider. Now all his other regrets are on display, in a self-interrogation much more penetrating than anything *Interview* ever printed.

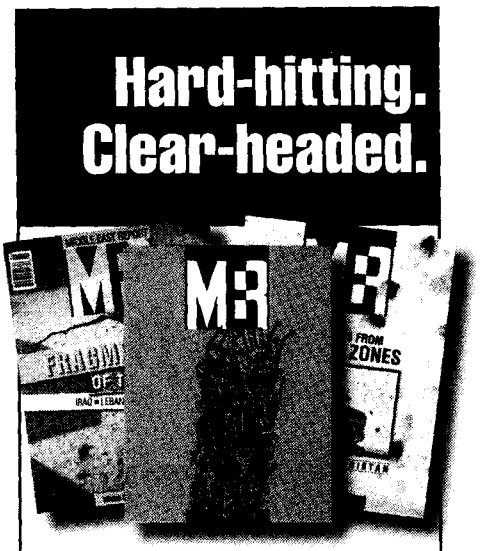
Everybody has read at least one recollection of the mixed bag of thrills and horrors that attends a Catholic boarding-school education. These chapters have tended to be written by those who survived the experience rather than by those who were physically and psychically crippled (at least until the recent freshet of agony and misery from those who were raped and tortured in infancy). Hughes certainly writes with the confidence of one who thinks it has done him no lasting harm. A whipping here, a mad lecture on sex there, a few laughs at the expense of priests who identified Marxism with the Antichrist, and of course an old Father O'Connell who had a feeling for devotional art and accidentally communicated this to the growing boy. On the whole, perhaps, school was a bit of a holiday from a slightly distraught home life, where both of Hughes's parents died without giving him the chance to murmur farewell.

One knows right away, however, that at the very first opportunity this boy is going to leave town, leave the country, set off for the bright lights first of London and then of Europe, pay for an abortion, vent his scorn on cold war politics and dogmatic faith, and tumble into a world of sex and drugs and rock and roll. And this is why I stress Hughes's addiction to understatement. He describes the utter boredom and pointlessness of much of the crash-pad-and-hash life into which he plunged, and it is only his attempt to make light of the experience that shoves it into a piercingly sharp relief. Many people had narrow escapes from the Sixties, when relationships could be dropped and picked up as quickly as callow opinions or tabs of acid, but it was Hughes's bad luck to form a kind of matrimony with a true drifter and dilettante (and evident sack-artist) who once gave him the very pox that she had caught from Jimi Hendrix. That could be a funny story at some remove: What makes it unfunny is her preference for hard drugs and needles over their only son, Danton Vidal Hughes. This boy later committed suicide. Hughes mentions the death almost as gruffly—and as briefly—as did Kipling in noting the passing of "my boy Jack" in *Something of Myself*.

It is only toward the very end of the memoir that Hughes utters the line that furnishes the title. "By now," he says, "I realized that my main impulse for writing a book was to force myself to find out about things I didn't know." This could be said by or about almost any author—"the educator must be educated," as Marx put it, and no serious person is not self-taught—but it would be as true to say of Hughes that he came to find out things that he knew already. He may have discarded (and with contempt at that) the wicked doctrines of Catholicism, but he knew at once how to appreciate Matthias Grünewald's altarpiece at Isenheim. His insight into Goya is well-known to us from a previous book. If you like Grünewald and Goya you will also recognize Otto Dix—several times mentioned in passing—as the real thing as soon as you meet him. And if these painters become your gold standard, and Barcelona and Florence are where you feel at home, and if you learned to distrust cant and meretriciousness and the fever for novelty when you were in your 20s, well then—you will one day try to evict popinjays like Julian Schnabel and Damien Hirst from the perch on which the pseudos have placed them.

At one point Hughes describes his beloved Catalonia as being, in temper, simultaneously revolutionary and conservative. He might have had himself—or indeed his favorite cartoonist Robert Crumb—in mind. Thus, from his religious boyhood Hughes retained what was aesthetically valuable, and from his Sixties youth he repudiated what was morally and intellectually vapid. In a vastly funny section, he describes how near a miss the latter transcendence was: When *Time* first called to recruit him from London, he was still so stoned and so paranoid that he thought it was a probe from the CIA. (He still exhibits a trace or two of this, making a listless and mushy analogy between Vietnam and Iraq.) But once the confusion had been overcome, there followed a season of pleasure for lovers of art, and a season of hell for the phonies who prostituted it. No critic could have asked for a better run. (And how odd that one should feel any nostalgia for the *Time* of those days.)

Here's something I didn't know until I read *Things I Didn't Know*. Leonardo da Vinci was so full of self-loathing and self-



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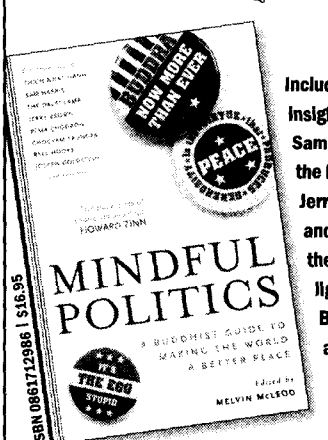

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doubt that, whenever he tested a new quill, he would scrawl the same unhappy inquiry: "Dimmi, dimmi se mai fu fatta cosa alcuna" (Tell me, tell me if anything ever got done). Is this encouraging or discouraging? I suspect that Hughes—who admits to an unfinished work on Leonardo as a reproach to all his finished ones—would prefer to say that it was a very good question, and be glad still to be around to ask it. ■

FILMS

Big in Japan

STUART KLAWANS

RIDING ALONE FOR THOUSANDS OF MILES • HOLLYWOODLAND • THIS FILM IS NOT YET RATED

As John Deere is to Midwestern fields, as Q-tips are to ears, so is Ken Takakura to the portrayal of gruff Japanese masculinity. Mainstream moviegoers first knew his mug from dozens of *yakuza* films, made beginning in the 1950s. Art-house audiences may have lagged in their appreciation, but they too came to love him, if only from seeing the hipster Takeshi Kitano imitate, and send up, Takakura's silent, brooding manner. I've read that Takakura extended his popularity westward when China, emerging from the Cultural Revolution, chose one of his pictures to be its first movie import in years. But it didn't occur to me, until I saw Zhang Yimou's *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*, that Takakura might have loomed as a father figure to some of China's Fifth Generation of filmmakers. In 1976 a movie starring Takakura reintroduced China to an image of the wider world, and to a popular Asian cinema. Only two years later, Zhang and his classmates entered the newly reopened Beijing Film Academy and began training for their own bid at international recognition.

Zhang succeeded so brilliantly at making himself an auteur that he, too, became a celebrity. So when a sharp Hong Kong producer, Bill Kong, helps to pair Zhang with his "childhood idol" Takakura, in a story that sends the Japanese star adventuring through present-day China, the words "crossover marketing" float into mind. Yes, comrades—the dynamo that drives the cinema is economic! But sometimes, when the right movie people come together, a blatantly commercial decision actually strengthens the artistic impulse, as you can see from Zhang's filial treatment of Takakura in *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*.

I will dispense with the setup briefly, since Zhang does, too. In *Riding Alone* Takakura plays the rough-hewn Takata, a provincial widower who lives alone in a fishing village and has been estranged for many years from his grown son, Ken-ichi. Why are the father and son estranged? Zou Jingzhi's screenplay deliberately leaves the question open, as if to signal that this film, which is otherwise so detailed, wants the situation of Takata/Takakura to be just-so. It's enough for the character-star to have an excuse to go to Tokyo—he's learned that Ken-ichi is in the hospital, seriously ill—and then on to China on behalf of his son. It seems that Ken-ichi, who teaches at a university, is an expert on Chinese folk opera and was supposed to travel to Yunnan to videotape a local performer singing the mask opera *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*. Now, without telling the incapacitated Ken-ichi of his intentions (since Ken-ichi won't talk to him), the father decides to go in his place. He undertakes this quixotic, just-so mission despite the impediments of speaking no Chinese, knowing nothing about folk opera, having no previous experience with video equipment and (in his own spare words) being "not good with people."

In brief, Takakura once more gets to be lonely, silent, stubborn and righteous. As elemental as the rocks on the fishing village's shoreline, his Takata effortlessly conveys probity to everyone he meets in China. These strangers may become exasperated with him—he keeps asking for the impossible—but they sense that this tough old man in the cloth cap and windbreaker is hurt in some way, which they can't bear to witness. Or, to be more precise: They do want to watch, and so do you, because it's awe-inspiring to see this father figure force several sentences out of himself, confessing his pain, and then play peekaboo behind a cloth, concealing and revealing tears that Ken Takakura should not shed. In lesser star turns, the performer and the character merge. In this great star turn, Takakura unites two audiences: the people watching him within the movie, and the ones watching him in the movie house.

Zhang, too, performs a star turn of sorts in *Riding Alone*, directing the kind of story that has become familiar to his fans. It's the tale of a single, headstrong person pursuing a near-unattainable goal through the landscape, and bureaucracy, of provincial China. In the first and most astonishing of these films, *The Story of Qiu Ju*, the protagonist was a pregnant housewife from a rural village. She sought justice on her travels, but instead discovered and enjoyed a new freedom. In *Not One Less*, the protagonist was an angry teenage schoolteacher, scarcely older than her impoverished pupils. She went out to seek a missing boy and instead discovered responsibility, and a sense of her own competence. *Riding Alone* is different in that the protagonist is elderly, male and foreign; but it holds to the formula by sending him on several wild-goose chases, which ultimately lead somewhere unexpected. Takata, who seeks reconciliation with Ken-ichi, ends up bonding with another man's son.

There is great liveliness along the way, with Takata meeting, exasperating and endearing himself to a succession of interpreters, officials and townsfolk; and there is much humor, some of it casual and naturalistic and some verging on the absurd. (The climactic scene features a thumping, caterwauling prison band and a chorus line of uniformed inmates, performing beneath a disco ball that is evidently the warden's proudest possession.) And, as always with Zhang's films, there is stunning beauty. You expect his pictures to look good; but the very first shot by cinematographer Zhao Xiaoding takes your breath away, showing you Takata silhouetted against silvery clouds and a shimmering, pounding, blue-gray ocean. The screaming gulls that tear through this image might almost be your everyday senses, flying away because they won't be needed for the next 108 minutes. All the other shots will be equally gorgeous, as Takata moves from a shining but monochromatic Japanese seascape to the richly colored villages and dizzying mountains of Yunnan.

What he finds there, in addition to beauty, is hospitality, extended everywhere

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but expressed best by the people of Stone Village, who lay out banquet tables for him in the middle of the street, lined up as far as the eye can see. It's as if Zhang, acting on behalf of the Chinese people, were welcoming Takakura as both a father and a star. Zhang and the people entertain him, too. The script has Takata/Takakura coming to China with the intention of shooting a movie; but at the end, through a neat reversal, he becomes a spectator more than a filmmaker, while Zhang's countrymen put on the show.

There was no need for this closing scene to incorporate any of the opera *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles*. The screen could have gone black as the long-deferred performance began. But Zhang would not cheat you of these moments. Economics drives the movie business, yes; but generosity is the theme of Zhang's *Riding Alone*, and the method, too.

As clumsily constructed as its title, *Hollywoodland* drags its slow length back and forth between a pair of narrative lines, one based on a true story (kind of), the other concocted out of two young filmmakers' memories of *Chinatown*.

The first line, which runs through a decade's events, concerns the life of actor George Reeves: his love affair with Toni Mannix, wife of MGM general manager Eddie Mannix; his unexpected and humiliating success, playing Superman on television; and his sudden death, apparently by his own hand, in 1959. The film's second line, which begins immediately after Reeves's death, concerns a fictitious private investigator named Louis Simo, who lives and works out of a cheap motel room, employs his girlfriend as a secretary and dines off of other people's plates at coffee shops. Like better movie gumshoes before him, Simo is sure to have his nose flattened and conscience aroused by the end of the picture. The occasion for both: his snooping into the possibility that Reeves was murdered.

I was 8 years old when Superman died, and as devoted a fan as Reeves ever had; so if there's a larger meaning to be had from this story, I was ready to receive it. And yet, watching *Hollywoodland*, I kept asking: What is the point? If this film is an exercise in style, then I think first-time screenwriter Paul Bernbaum does not yet know how to cut back and forth with any grace, nor does first-time director Allen Coulter (a veteran of episodic television) yet know how to tell a story that runs longer than an hour. If the film is an opportunity for the actors to shine, then I think Adrien Brody can furrow his forehead and pull down his eyebrows with as much wiseass sensitivity as anyone since James Dean, but he can't do much else with Simo's character as written. I also worry that Ben Affleck, impersonating an actor who found his natural level as Superman, may suffer from having found his own natural level as George Reeves.

Is the point, then, the old, reliable one, that Hollywoodland is Tinseltown? No again. The film does give you a dose of the hypocrisy and corruption, the quick money and easy sex, that are so intrinsic to legends of Los Angeles (not to mention New York, Washington, Chicago and Peyton Place). Yet *Hollywoodland* ultimately focuses not on excesses but on limits. Reeves must understand that he will never have a great career; and Simo must see that he isn't a beatnik Mike Hammer, and so ought to put on a white shirt and tie and take care of his son.

The characters are disappointed men. The movie, like them, is a well-meaning mediocrity.

Because it will be impossible in many places for Kirby Dick to advertise his new documentary, to book it into theaters or to dump it into bins as a DVD, I feel I ought to promote the picture. So: Please make an effort to see *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*, a very funny, frequently infuriating, and (of course) unrated exposé of the film rating board of the Motion Picture Association of America.

If you follow the movies at all, you will know that MPAA is the lobbying organization for the six major studios, which are now units of companies that control some 90 percent of the media in the United States. In 1968 the organization instituted its ratings system so that "people could make decisions about...what movies were appropriate for their children." (This, in MPAA's own language.) Ratings are given by an in-house board that operates anonymously and is notorious for its biases: It is lenient toward violence and studio productions, stringent toward sex and independent productions and noticeably squeamish about homosexuality. Filmmakers are free to disregard this secret group of big-media representatives, but the costs of noncompliance are high (see above).

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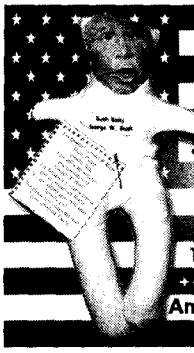

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PUZZLE NO. 3049

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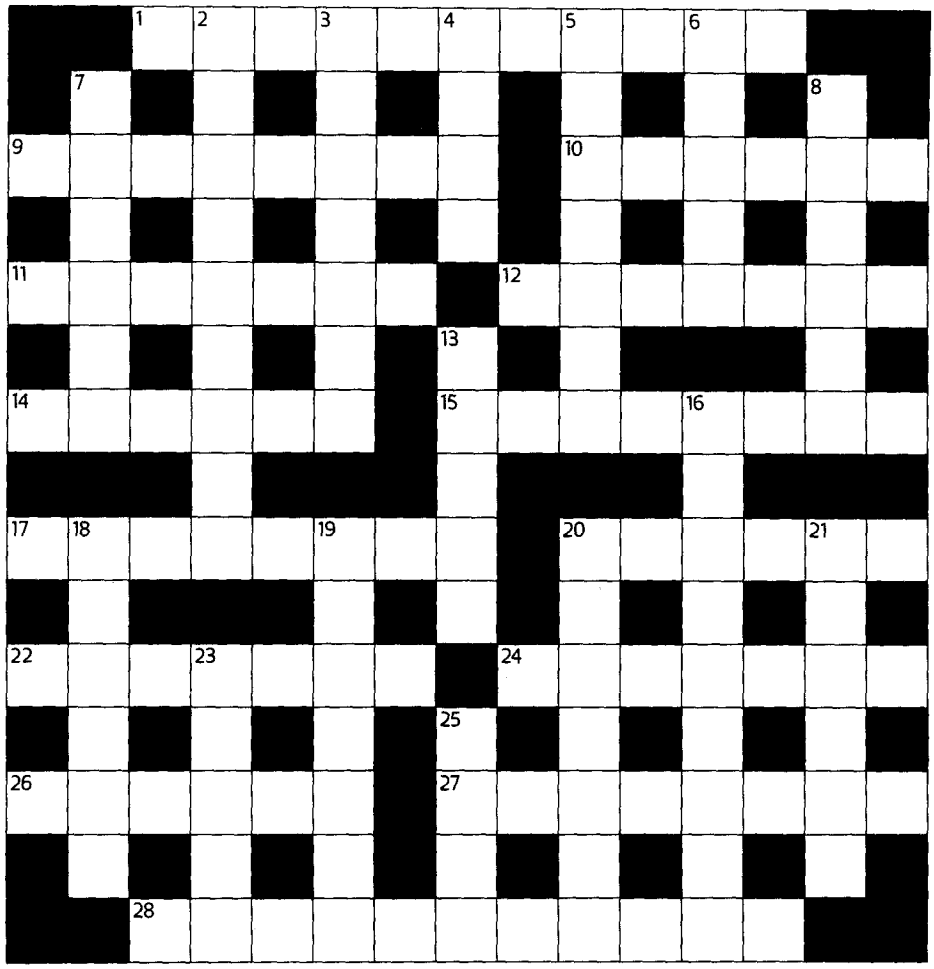

ACROSS

1 That with which the kids might take turns are old medicines taken in July or August, one hears. (11)

9 and **10** Showing how the jumper woos might not be typical of an ordinary trial. (8,6)

11 It might describe sessions heard at 10, getting to work around the near sort. (7)

12 What the turner of 1 might have that shows spots of interest to medico. (7)

14 My sets get upset, but show methodical arrangement. (6)

15 Mongolian people like the one who danced with the King seem awkward. (8)

17 Like Nero, throwing dice around the place. (8)

20 A relative on the male side shows how a broken nag took food. (6)

22 A variety of *stannum*, or just an old picture of it? (7)

24 In the old verse we are told they were wall-hangers, but here in Paris a large number is given to the French. (7)

26 A publicized spinner had gin mixed with it. (6)

27 Paper nautiluses are typical of them. (8)

28 A would-be piper, though what he called for could just fiddle around. (3,4,4)

DOWN

2 The upper part of the heart, which the one playing might pull out? (5-4)

3 Heard rumors to show what must be in your head? (7)

4 and **13** Stay for a while and look at what the race official probably has. (4-5)

5 A relative beginning, coming to an end when certain diseased people were made to cry this way! (7)

6 Trips taken in a French town? (5)

7 and **25** John preceded this at times, as a personification of liquor. (10)

8 Points in the right direction those that might have bossy friends? (6)

13 See 4

16 A large number with one here in Paris, friend! It's how transportation starts in some cities. (9)

18 A priest? Yes, in Berlin—starting to help an old prophet. (6)

19 Sarge, is that what they call you, getting to sort of pick a kind beginning? (3-4)

20 Shake the case, and shake a contemplative type. (7)

21 Has an inclination to be about right, when it comes to the way things are going. (6)

23 Referring to certain things that come and go when the boy comes up with it. (5)

25 See 7

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

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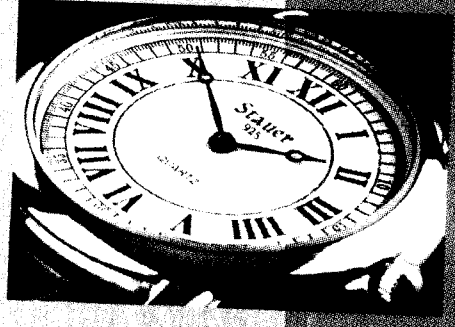
More than just a silver lining...

The timepiece with a sterling reputation

It's time to take a position in the Precious Metals market. The newly designed sleek .925 is the only fine men's watch that is made of Sterling Silver and employs an ultrathin Swiss jeweled movement. The price is outrageously low. Other jewelers would have the nerve to charge this price for just a sterling key chain. Instead Stauer breaks the $200 barrier on the handsome vintage styled .925.

Sterling Silver...a precious metal of choice. Sterling Silver has long been the elegant metal used for the best in custom accessories. Good sterling silver cufflinks and a sterling silver belt buckle have been classic looks since the 1920's. But even costly Swiss watches have used base metals like nickel and steel as their case material and still charge outrageous sums.



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NEW

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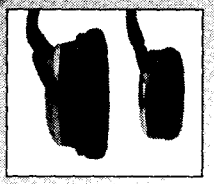

QC2 headphones (left). New QC3 headphones (right).

The challenge of reducing size. Studies show that many people prefer on-ear headphones. But with conventional technology, smaller earcups compromise performance. So we launched a research project to explore something we were not sure was even possible – overcoming the performance limitations of smaller size and on-ear design.

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